F is For Future

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F is For Future

by RoseClara28

Summary

A collection of snippets about what has happened with the Murphy family from 1975 and onward, starting with a one-shot of Frank and his extended family on New Years Eve of 1999.

P is For Prologue

Chapter Summary

> On December 31, 1999, Frank joyously reflects how grateful he is for his life and thinks about everything that has changed.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

December 31, 1999
Rustvale, PA
The Murphy House

On this particular (and supposedly what will be iconic and unforgettable) New Year's Eve night, a nearly 65-year-old Frank Murphy's living room was packed in a tight squeeze with so many people tonight besides him, Sue, and their golden retriever, Colonel, whom they got after Megan moved out of the house.

Their whole extended family was here - Frank's bedridden elderly mother, Eileen, her girlfriend Lois, Louis, his boyfriend Ray, 40-year-old Kevin, his wife Alice, their seven-year-old daughter Natalie, 37-year-old Bill, his wife Nia, their five-year-old son Garrett, their three-year-old son Zach, their 11-month-old daughter Brooke (who was days away from being a year old), 35-year-old Maureen, her husband Scott, their four-year-old daughter Alyssa, their one-year-old daughter Maddie, 25-year-old Megan, the Goldmans, the Roosevelts, the Ichikawas, and a few of the neighbors on Slagtree Court.

Thankfully, Stan and Marilyn were not present (and finally dead) because Frank and Sue couldn't imagine what kind of hurtful, bigoted remarks Stan would say about their youngest child, daughters-in-law, son-in-law, and grandchildren. If he wasn't happy with Kevin marrying a Jewish woman, then he definitely would not be pleased with him procreating with one or with who Bill and Maureen ended up settling down...or even with Megan being bisexual.

They were all hanging out in the living room, which hadn't been redecorated since 1986. Everyone chuckled about who knows what as they watched the footage of crowds at Times Square and reporters talking about Y2K and 2000 on the Hitachi 31-inch CRT TV Frank and Sue had since 1991.

Every adult in the room was drinking beer and enjoying slices of cheese, salami, crackers, deviled eggs, and a variety of fruits and vegetables from the platter on the coffee table. The only exceptions were Scott's pregnant sister and Alice, who were avoiding alcohol and deli

meats; Alice also appeared to be feeling a bit unwell. They all waited for the countdown to not only the new year but also the start of a new century and a new millennium.

All of the children (most of them under the age of eight), on the other hand, were fast asleep. The only child in the house that was still awake at this hour was Darryl Roosevelt's 10-year-old son Tyler. Maddie and Brooke had been fast asleep in their portable travel cribs since 9:45. Zach, Alyssa, and Daniel Goldman's two-year-old daughter Abby got cranky before their circadian rhythms gave in at 10:00 and were carried to the guest rooms that were the rooms of the Murphy children. Natalie, Garrett, Darryl's seven-year-old daughter Amber, and Daniel's six-year-old daughter Leah tried hard to stay awake until midnight, but they passed out on the couch at 11:30 pm. Scott's sister Lori, who was six months pregnant with a 21st century baby, had already fallen asleep on the couch.

Besides the fear of a possible shutdown in the computer lab, Kevin and Alice mentioned how some of their students' parents were preparing for an apocalypse and how they ran into some of the parents at the grocery store last week. Nia talked about how the tech guy at the doctor's office she worked at had to update and replace the software when she noticed that an upcoming appointment in January with a patient had the year listed as 1900 instead of 2000 (a minor issue that had a simple fix). Bill threw in his two cents on how his workplace was dealing with rewriting and replacing computer programs. Maureen and Scott, given their PhDs in science, said that all this panic about failing computer systems, power outages, transportation shutdowns, bank closures, and nuclear safety was a bunch of bullshit.

At the moment, Megan (still coping with her divorce from Vic Reynolds Jr) was obviously super drunk and belting out the lyrics to Prince's iconic song about 1999.

"I was dreaming when I wrote this; forgive me if it goes astray!" Megan waved her can of beer as she danced and stumbled. *"But when I woke up this morning, I could have sworn it was judgment day!"*

"Oh, Christ, she's singing that Prick song," Frank muttered. *At least she wasn't singing that explicit Nirvana song about a moist vagina*, he thought. Even Kevin was shocked by the sexually explicit lyrics.

"Frank," Sue sighed, slightly patting her husband's shoulder and reminding him not to yell, curse, or lose his temper when their grandchildren were present.

"It's Prince, Dad! He’s amazing!" Megan shouted with a slight slur to her speech before continuing to sing, ignoring the glares from everyone in the house. *"Say 2000-00, party's over. Oops, out of time! So tonight, I'm gonna party like it's 1999!"*

"Okay, I think you should sit down," Kevin gently approached his sister, carefully taking the can of beer out of her hand and then sitting her down on the couch. "I'll get you a glass of water."

"Damn, we really need to be more like the Waltons and less like the Simpsons," Frank sighed loudly enough for everyone to hear him.

"Dad, we were always like the Simpsons," Kevin pointed out, rolling his eyes as he used the tap water to pour a glass of water for his adult baby sister. "And stop quoting George Bush. It's bad enough that his son could possibly be president. Also, the Waltons were boring and unrealistic."

"Well, your perverted president got impeached!" Frank retorted, prepared to laugh in his son Kevin's face. However, Sue placed her hand on her husband's shoulder and shook her head, reminding him once again not to pick fights with Kevin - especially not political ones - or even threaten to put someone through a wall, particularly with their grandchildren present. Frank also realized that his comment made him sound a bit like Stan.

Frank also noticed that Alice was mouthing "don't" to Kevin as she rubbed his back, telling him the same thing. Despite his children holding opposite political opinions, Frank remembered that he also voted for a president who got impeached. Also, he remembered his family was never like the Waltons or even the Bradys.

Still, Frank could never fathom what made *The Simpsons* so good and why his own offspring (Megan even got Sue into it) enjoyed that stupid show about those yellow cocksuckers.

And why the fuck are they even yellow? It doesn't make any goddamn sense! He always thought. *Did the nuclear power plant give everyone jaundice?*

Anyway, Frank viewed all of the framed portraits of his children and grandchildren displayed all around the house and on the walls. There were his and Sue's wedding photo, individual school photos of all four of their children, and individual wedding portraits of their three older children with their spouses.

Also displayed were professionally done photos of their grandchildren. First was a portrait of a five-year-old Natalie happily posing in front of a sage backdrop in white tights, shiny black Mary Janes, a fancy blue holiday dress, and a matching bow in her hair. There was also a recent photo of Garrett and Zach sitting on a small bench in front of a gray backdrop, dressed like bible salesmen, while baby Brooke was resting in both their laps. Finally, in front of a white backdrop was a picture of three-year-old Alyssa sitting with her legs apart while holding baby Maddie right in front of her, both girls barefoot and wearing summer dresses.

Then, from a far distance, Frank eyed the three Christmas (and Hanukkah) cards from Kevin, Bill, and Maureen being held by magnets on the refrigerator. Each card was a portrait of them posing with their families. Seeing all of that, as well as the affection Frank currently saw his children and their spouses give each other, made him consider once again how grateful he was to have made it through the 90s and even to live to see a new century and a new millennium.

Ever since his terrifying heart attack in 1982, Frank learned to appreciate his life more, spend more time with his family, and be less of a rage-a-holic. He couldn't imagine all the milestones of his kids he would have missed if he didn't survive. He never would have seen Megan graduate high school. He never would have been there to see Kevin and Bill get married. He never would have been there to walk Maureen and Megan down the aisle. Most of all, he never would have gotten to meet any of his grandchildren.

However, he just hoped he would live long enough to see Megan eventually get married again and have children, given that her first marriage didn't last, and she just came out to us as bisexual, which she says means she likes both men and women. It took a while for Frank to take in, but Sue accepted the fact right away. She also reassured him that with IVF and sperm donation nowadays, it was probably now possible for gays, lesbians, and even singles to procreate and have the opportunity that Louis and Eileen didn't have. However, Frank doubted that the gays would ever be allowed to get legally married.

And speaking of gay marriage, seeing all of his three older children with their non-white, non-Christian families and mixed-race and mixed-faith children, Frank couldn't help but think about all the social changes that happened throughout the past 30 years.

Kevin and Alice lived in Staten Island, New York with their daughter. Kevin, who had shoulder-length long hair that he usually wore in a ponytail and needed glasses to see, was an elementary school music teacher while Alice taught high school English.

They dated throughout high school and college (and were also on and off again until 1981, the year Kevin earned his bachelor's degree in music), where they attended different universities in New York City; Kevin went to Julliard while Alice went to NYU. During Alice's time in grad school at Cornell, when they lived in Ithaca, Kevin renamed his local rock band with Lex, Bolo, and Ben, calling themselves Triple Helix.

After Alice earned her master's degree in literature and Kevin converted to Judaism, they were married in the summer of 1983.

When Triple Helix broke up in 1985, since they all had wives or children to provide for, Kevin and Alice decided to start trying for a baby...but had trouble conceiving. Eventually, it was discovered that the issue was that Kevin had a low sperm count.

Their infertility struggle put a strain on their marriage to the point where they needed marriage counseling. Fortunately, their marriage was repaired, and then they were happily surprised with a pregnancy in 1992. Natalie was born on Black Friday that year after Alice went into labor while the Murphys and Goldmans were sitting down for Thanksgiving dinner. Because of that, Frank jokingly called her the "party crasher". Now, a few people in the room were wondering if Alice was secretly pregnant again.

Bill and Nia lived in Chicago with their three children. Bill, who still had that mullet he got in 1983, worked as an accountant while Nia was a pediatrician at a clinic. Although they both grew up in the Quint Cities area and Frank worked with her father, they didn't interact that much until 1990.

After Bill earned his bachelor's degree in business from the University of Pittsburgh in 1984, he moved back to Rustvale and worked at a bill collection firm that paid him terribly while living in a shitty apartment. He eventually found this life unsatisfactory as he was going through a series of failed relationships and failed business proposals.

He finally got out of the lowest point in his life in 1990 when he ran into Nia at a bar after he left his 10-year high school reunion. They had a long conversation about Frank and Rosie and where they both were in their lives.

After Bill went home that night, he was offered a better-paying accounting job in Chicago and decided to take it. Chicago also happened to be where Nia was doing her pediatric residency. They also happened to end up living in the same apartment building and began hanging out more before they started dating.

They got married in March of 1993 and then had Garrett one year later in early 1994. When Zach was born in the summer of 1996, Bill and Nia decided their family was complete. However, a month before Brooke was born in January of 1999 (unlike Garrett and Zach, she was an "accident"...and she is also a grandchild Frank happened to share a birthday with), Bill decided to get snipped.

Maureen, whose hair had been cut short to a bob and also needed glasses to see, and Scott lived in Pasadena, California, where they both worked as software developers, with their two daughters. Scott also grew up in Rustvale, graduated high school the same year as Maureen, and even knew her since elementary school, but they didn't get together until their twenties.

Maureen was once engaged to her asshole college boyfriend from MIT, Mark MacAllister, in 1986, but she broke things off when she caught him cheating on her. After that, she focused on her education and career and didn't date for a while.

Maureen and Scott crossed paths and met again in 1988 when they were coincidentally in the same doctoral engineering program at Stanford. They were academic rivals (just like they were in high school) for a while before they eventually started to bond more and become friends before officially dating in 1989.

They were married in the fall of 1991 after they both earned their PhDs, but originally decided to wait a few years to have children since they wanted to pay off some student loans, save money, and just enjoy each other. However, that plan changed when Maureen was unexpectedly pregnant in 1993. Unfortunately, their happiness was short-lived when it ended in a traumatizing miscarriage on Christmas.

Thankfully, Maureen's second pregnancy was successful and their first daughter, Alyssa, was born in the fall of 1995. Their second daughter, Maddie, was born in the spring of 1998. The way both of them were born was how Sue once thought about giving birth when she was pregnant with Megan.

Even after Maureen graduated high school, Frank and Sue knew they still had 10 more years before Megan would graduate. And Frank couldn't wait for her to graduate because she was like Kevin with boobs when she was a teenager. And speaking of Kevin, she often liked to call him whenever she would get in trouble.

When Megan graduated high school in 1993, Frank and Sue were overwhelmed with so much joy given everything else that happened. Not only was their youngest child leaving the

nest, but Maureen had been happily married for at least a year, Kevin finally gave them their first grandchild, and Bill finally got married.

Throughout her college years at the University of Pittsburgh, Megan had many hook-ups with men and women, although her parents had no idea. They kept asking her if she was seeing anyone, and she said "no".

When she earned her bachelor's degree in psychology, she married Vic Reynolds Jr in the spring of 1997 on a crazy romantic whim. Because it was sudden and fast, Frank and Sue thought she made a terrible mistake. As it turned out, they were right because they were divorced in 1998. She also later told them she was bisexual.

She lived in Newark and was currently working on her master's degree in counseling from Rutgers University.

Frank and Sue were also kind of relieved that their children didn't really live up to some of the expectations and pressures they put on them over 30 years ago. After so many years, they realized it was good that their children started their families later in life.

Frank's mind then drifted back to reality as Sue wrapped her arm around him and made him join everyone else as they counted down to 2000.

Chapter End Notes

> The rest of the story will go into more detail and be told through different flashbacks and one-shots and events about each individual Murphy child and their journey (most of it discussing everything up to 1999). It will start with a chapter between Kevin in Alice in 1975.
>
> Yes, I know I put Megan in a bad place with her getting divorced, but there will be a happy outcome for her later.

P is For Pill

Chapter Summary

Kevin and Alice have a pregnancy scare.

April 18, 1975
Rustvale, PA
The Murphy House

On a Friday afternoon after school, Kevin tried to concentrate on coming up with words for another verse for a new song he was writing for his band. It was difficult to focus, as the main thing on his mind was the possibility of becoming a father; Alice had informed him her period was late two days earlier.

However, they wouldn't know for sure until it gets confirmed by a doctor, and Alice was supposed to receive the results this morning. Still, the creeping anxiety kept ganging up on him with everything that was possibly yet to come if Alice really was pregnant.

Not only would Kevin be someone's father, but he would also become a father at 16. He knew he wasn't financially, mentally, or emotionally ready to support a child. Despite that, he decided that whatever final decision Alice ended up making, he would support and stand by her.

However, that would also mean he must relinquish his rock star dream. At least one of them might have to drop out of school, and Kevin didn't want to do that when he was finally taking school seriously and was trying really hard this year to keep his grades up. They might even need to get married, and he knew how Dr. Goldman felt about Alice procreating with someone outside of their community. Neither of them had jobs, so how the fuck were they supposed to provide for this kid right now?

Most of all, he dreaded how their parents would react, especially their dads. Frank would definitely kill him, and Erwin would be more than furious. He chased him out the window while he was still fully naked when he caught them trying to have sex on Christmas Eve, so who knows how he would react to him getting her pregnant.

Also, he knew they used a condom when they had sex. Maybe it broke?

He continued to try to take his mind off the situation by writing his song until his thoughts were interrupted by the basement doors opening, revealing the twilight sky and his father.

"Kevin, Alice is here!" Frank called out. "She wants to talk to you alone. Go!"

With a surge of adrenaline, Kevin slammed his pen onto his cluttered bed, where homework, textbooks, and rough drafts lay in disarray. Without a second thought, he dashed up the stairs, his heart racing, until he was face-to-face with Alice, standing right by the basement doors.

Frank stood a few feet away, scratching his head as he stared at the teenage couple, raising his brow with suspicion. "I'll...give you two some privacy," he declared hesitantly as he walked back into the house through the back door.

Once Frank disappeared out of sight and was far enough to where their voices weren't in his earshot, Kevin noticed that Alice's look displayed a happy, relieved smile instead of dread.

"So, are you..." Kevin hesitated, twiddling his thumbs as he gently grasped Alice's hands in his, feeling a flutter of anxiety in his stomach.

"Good news. I'm not pregnant," Alice confidently stated in a firm, resolute matter-of-fact manner. Her eyes shined with a mix of joy and relief.

Kevin's rapidly pounding heart slowed down as he couldn't help but exhale with relief as he pulled Alice into a tight embrace. "Thank god!"

It had been two weeks since the pregnancy scare, and both Kevin and Alice had agreed to keep it a secret, putting the incident behind them. They decided not to tell anyone, not even their parents or siblings - who would surely snitch on them. Only Bolo, Lex, Hannah, and Rachel were aware of what had happened.

As they passionately made out on Alice's bed (thank goodness, her parents were out of town for a week and Daniel was sleeping over at a friend's house), Kevin noticed a weird circular thing of what looked like a hand mirror full of tictacs on her nightstand.

As Kevin glanced at the breath mints on Alice's nightstand, he thought to himself that he could definitely use one. He preferred his mouth to taste fresh when he kissed her.

"Hey, do you mind if I pop one of your mints right there?" Kevin requested, gesturing toward the thing on her nightstand. "I want my mouth to taste extra fresh when you kiss me."

Alice paused for a moment as she processed what Kevin said, her face shifting from a look of confusion to amusement before she couldn't help but burst into laughter at her boyfriend's ignorance.

"What is so funny?" Kevin, bafflingly raising his eyebrow, asked as he and Alice broke apart from the missionary position and sat upright on the bed.

"Those aren't tictacs, you dork," chuckled Alice, playfully punching his arm. "Those are pills."

"Oh," blushed Kevin, rubbing the back of his neck. "What kind of pills? You're not sick are you?"

"No, no," reassured Alice. "Those are birth control pills."

"Oh," Kevin finally understood. "Are those the kind of pills you take that keep the stork from visiting so you can have all the sex you want?"

"Yep."

"Cool," said Kevin nervously. "But why?"

"Well, since we had that scare two weeks ago, I thought that maybe we should be extra careful and double up, so we never actually end up in a situation like that," explained Alice. "So, I asked my mom if I could go on the pill, and she said yes."

"Does she know about..."

"No," reassured Alice before she reached her hand out and placed it on Kevin's shoulder. "And since nobody is here, how about we..."

"Oh, yeah. Of course!"

F is For Funeral

Chapter Summary

The Murphys hold a funeral for Major.

Chapter Notes

Hey, after I did some thinking, I realized there were a couple missing scenes I wish I included in 1975 and 1982, so I squeezed in this chapter.

TW: This chapter is about the death of a pet.

November 1, 1975
Rustvale, PA
The Murphy House

The Murphys were aware that the day Major would pass away would eventually arrive. While it was remarkable that he had lived nearly 14 years, it was still heartbreaking to lose the family dog who had been a part of their lives for what felt like an eternity.

Obviously, he was getting old as the dog became less energetic as the years passed, yet they were still unprepared for this loss. Major was suffering from intestinal problems that continued to worsen, and he was too old for corrective surgery. Not only that, but the Murphys didn't have that kind of money for all those treatments and procedures anyway, so they haf no choice but to have him be put to sleep.

The entire family was gathered in the woods behind their house, hosting a funeral for their beloved pet. A three-foot hole had been dug, where Major's lifeless body, covered and wrapped in a blanket, had been placed.

Frank cradled a one-year-old Megan in his arms as he and Sue stood to the right of the freshly dug grave. They clasped each other's hands while their three older children somberly lined up on the left next to the shovel pitched in the pile of dirt; pieces of paper in each of their hands. All three of them had written their own eulogies, mixed with sadness and nostalgia, for their beloved childhood pet.

"Maureen, princess, why don't you go ahead and start," forwarded Frank, his voice trembling while trying to hold back tears and shove the heartache down. Sue, on the other hand, had a red face full of hot tears that stuck to her face as they streamed down.

Maureen, who, along with Bill, was letting her tears fall and be visible to everyone, looked down at her piece of notebook paper and read her words aloud. "Major, I've loved you all my life. We will never forget you, Major. If it even exists, I hope you're having fun in Doggy Heaven where there is lots of furniture to chew on and more yards to poop in. If not, then I hope you're having a nice nap."

When the recently 11-year-old finished the last word of her heartfelt eulogy, she sniffled and wiped away more oncoming tears. She and Bill had known Major all their lives since they were born into this crazy family. The thought of a house without a pet just felt so wrong and empty to them.

Bill opened his piece of paper to read what he had written. "Major, you are the best dog ever, and I'm saying that because you're the only dog I've ever had..." He tried to continue, but all that escaped him were heavy sobs as he struggled to contain his tears and stay composed; eah breath feeling like a struggle.

Sue immediately made her way over to the 13-year-old, reached out and placing a reassuring hand on his shoulder, allowing him to lean against her. As he rested his head against her side, she wrapped her arm around him.

"Kevin?" Frank glanced at his tense older son, who was biting his lip and tightly folding his arms. "Anything you want to say...or sing about?"

Kevin remained silent and stood there motionless, not even shedding a tear. Despite the heaviness of this loss pressing on him, just like Frank, he was entirely stoic, or at least trying to maintain his exterior foritude, throughout the entire ceremony.

Still, Frank and Sue knew better. They didn't need to see tears to know their oldest child was hurting behind the tough-guy facade he often displayed. The 16-year-old had a passion for writing songs and poetry about almost every life situation or emotion he was feeling, and the fact that he didn't bring his guitar and had no anthem or poem about this or even had any ambition to make one was a bit off.

Sure, he was able to write and perform that god-awful 20-minute "Sky Grandpa" song at Big Bill's funeral, but Kevin knew that guy was one of the biggest dildos on the planet, and the two of them weren't really close his whole life.

Of course, Kevin was devastated and upset about losing the dog he had since he was two. He briefly yet vaguely recalled that snowy day after Christmas in 1961 when his parents brought Major home as a puppy. However, he didn't want his parents or siblings to see him cry, something he didn't like to do in front of people...even Alice. To be honest, this whole funeral and having to give a eulogy was making his grief even harder to bear.

When Frank noticed that Kevin's eyes were turning red, indicating that tears were probably fighting their way out, he cautiously approached him and extended his free arm out in an attempt to comfort him, but Kevin violently pulled away.

When it was Frank and Sue's turn to deliver their eulogies, they fondly recalled the moment they decided to get a puppy. The man who once occupied Vic's house - who wore a beret,

made those great burgers, blew his head off in 1963, whose name they couldn't remember - had a dog that recently had a litter of four puppies. He offered the puppies to anyone in the neighborhood or around town who wanted one, and it was at that moment that Frank and Sue decided to add a pet to their growing family.

"Major, you had a good run, buddy. You will be missed, you dumb stupid maniac," lamented Frank, who didn't write anything or plan anything to say. Instead, he simply expressed his feelings with two phrases and moved on. "You'll be shitting and puking on God's floor now."

Sue didn't prepare a speech either, but she did have one important thing to say to Major. "Goodbye, Beret Guy's puppy," she said tearfully before she took Megan from Frank and stood by her three other children, watching her husband pick up the shovel to start burying the dog.

M is For Mr. Happier Guy

Chapter Summary

Alice accepts Kevin's second marriage proposal.

Chapter Notes

Hey, after I did some thinking, I realized there were a couple missing scenes I wish I included in 1975 and 1982, so I squeezed in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

November 19, 1982
Ithaca, NY
Cornell Park

It was the middle of the day when Kevin and Alice peacefully sat on the bench in the park located right outside Cornell University, where Alice was attending grad school. After she submitted her term paper, they went for a walk in the park before taking a seat to admire the changing autumn scenery, lovingly holding each other's hands.

They dated on and off (and with other people) until earning their bachelor's degrees in 1981. Aside from their brief break-up in the fall of 1974 after Kevin broke Daniel's jaw, the young couple broke up twice before getting back together.

Although they managed to stay together throughout the rest of high school and were accepted to two different universities in the same borough of New York City, they amicably decided to break up in the fall of 1977. They figured that their relationship might not survive college and believed it was better to end things sooner rather than later.

However, during the summer of 1978, they ran into each other at the store while home. Both had moved on and were dating someone else during the spring semester, but those relationships ended quickly. They ended up having a one-night stand and decided to give their relationship another chance.

Alice and Kevin were together for two more years until early 1980 when Kevin proposed on New Year's Day. Alice initially thought it was too soon. However, after she thought it over and asked her family for advice on what she should do, she declined when she finally considered their different religious backgrounds (it was actually her parents' projections in

hindsight, and she would go on to regret it during their time apart) and then broke things off, thinking it would be for good.

Both moved on and entered serious relationships with people who shared their same religious and socioeconomic backgrounds (a Jewish man from a middle-class family and an Irish Catholic woman from a working-class family) that lasted about a year, but these ultimately ended in early 1981 when they realized they were not compatible with their new partners.

Fortunately, they ran into each other at a Shire of Frodo concert in April of that year. After two months of just being friends and taking things slowly, Kevin and Alice decided to get back together for good, despite the doubts expressed by both of their families due to their religious and socioeconomic differences, particularly Alice's parents, who couldn't understand why their daughter kept returning to Kevin.

Currently, Alice and Kevin were living in a small apartment in Ithaca. Alice was pursuing her master's degree in literature, which she expected to complete in the spring semester. While Alice attended graduate school, Kevin earned their rent and grocery money from working part-time at a music store and often traveled to New York City to play gigs with his band, Triple Helix. He hoped that one day they would become famous and sell many albums.

Alice was unaware, and so was Kevin's family, that he was in the process of converting to Judaism. He had spent a whole year studying the faith. Since getting back together, Kevin figured that if their relationship was going to work in the long term, he was probably going to have to convert to Alice's religion. What Alice also didn't realize was that Kevin had a box containing an engagement ring tucked away in his pocket.

Now, he was finally going to try and propose again, hoping things would work out the second time.

"Kevin, are you okay?" Alice asked, noticing that her boyfriend seemed a little tense.

"Yeah, I'm fine," Kevin replied uncertainly, smoothing his hand through his hair. "It's just that...I think I should go ahead and tell you this."

"Alright," Alice said in a matter-of-fact tone, curious about what Kevin was reaching for in his pocket.

"Look, I know that last time I did this, we ended up breaking up, but I think things could work this time," suggested Kevin as he pulled out the black box to where it was visible to Alice's eyes. "You don't know this, but I've been studying Judaism all year, and I'll be happy to convert for you. By the way, the Beit Din and Rabbi Shapiro will test me after Thanksgiving break."

Alice was shocked to hear what Kevin was telling her, and it wasn't that he was proposing again; he was making a full commitment to convert to her religion. While she had taught him many things about being Jewish and a bit of Hebrew, and he had shared a few aspects of Catholicism with her, this was a totally different thing and a big decision he was making.

"Kevin, are you sure? Have you thought about what your parents might think of you rejecting your Catholic upbringing?"

"Alice," Kevin clasped her hand tightly. "I want to spend the rest of my life with you, and if we're going to have a future together, we need to practice the same religion. I don't care that much about being Catholic, and my family doesn't even go to Mass. But, you know how your parents feel about me, especially your dad. It's not going to work without their approval. I'll be fine with giving up Christmas since Hanukkah can make up for that."

Although Alice admired Kevin's desire to please and impress her family and commit to becoming Jewish for her sake, she hated the idea of Kevin putting himself through this just to kiss her parents' asses. It especially troubled her because Kevin had previously expressed his intolerance for the extremely strict Catholic upbringing of his ex-girlfriend, Kelly O'Neill, and her desire to remain abstinent until marriage.

"Babe, I'm not going to let my parents' projections get in the way this time," reassured Alice, gently placing her other hand on Kevin's shoulder. "If my parents don't like me marrying you, then too bad for them because I love you, and they're going to be the ones who need to accept it."

The two of them were quiet for a while before Kevin finally broke the silence, acknowledging Alice's subtle acceptance of him asking her to marry him. "So, are you saying yes to marrying me? Because you didn't let me..."

"Of course, Kevin, I'll marry you," chuckled Alice, the mood in the atmosphere suddenly shifting from heavy to joyful as she realized she kind of ruined Kevin's moment to romantically ask her to marry him. "Give me the ring," she said, holding her right hand out for Kevin to slide the ring onto her finger before they got back to the topic of Kevin converting. "Still, are you sure you want to convert? Because you do realize you can't eat pork, right? That includes bacon," she warned.

"Yes, I know," sighed Kevin, defeated, admitting bacon would be the thing he would miss most. "But, still, I will convert for you. I already have the test scheduled. I'm not quitting while I'm ahead."

"Alright," Alice surrendered, scooting closer toward Kevin. "We can still celebrate Christmas if you like. I don't see anything wrong with our children growing up with both Christmas and Hanukkah, and even both baptisms and bar and bat mitzvahs."

"Well, you can just call me 'Mr. Happier Guy'," mused Kevin, calling back to the first song he ever wrote about her, and earning a laugh from Alice as the two of them shared kisses.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed those two extra forgotten chapters. Please review :)

H is For Heart Attack

Chapter Summary

Frank has a heart attack.

November 25, 1982
Rustvale, PA
Rustvale General Hospital

Sue, Kevin, Alice, Bill, his girlfriend Kim, Maureen, her boyfriend Mark, Megan, and Goomer - who was, as usual, spying on them through their window instead of spending the holiday with Evelyn when this happened - were all anxiously and impatiently sitting in the waiting room of the hospital, waiting to hear some news regarding Frank as the stench of antiseptic hung in the air.

They all kept replaying the whole scene in their heads. One minute, they were all having an almost nice Thanksgiving dinner like a happy fucking family for once. The next minute, Frank (at the angriest his family had ever seen him) collapsed and was on the verge of dying after screaming at Mark for allegedly getting Maureen pregnant and jabbing threats at him.

"You know, last week when Maureen told me she was pregnant, I..." Mark casually commented at the dinner table, almost as if it was no big deal to him or Maureen.

Everyone at the table glared at the couple in disbelief and bewilderment; Sue planting her face in her hands and Frank cholerically pinching the bridge of his nose.

"Oh, god," Bill muttered under his breath while Kevin produced a deep, aggravated sigh loud enough for everyone to hear. Both of them loathed the idea of accepting Mark (who has been with Maureen since she moved into her dorm since August) as their brother-in-law or in their lives forever.

"Gross," Megan whispered to herself before taking a sip of water.

"Mark!" Maureen seethed, slamming her fist on the table and gritting her teeth angrily as her whole family continued to glare at her in shock, even though this wasn't an actual bombshell to drop on her family since her boyfriend carelessly let the wrong words slip out.

He neglected to mention the word "thought" since he was only talking about a pregnancy scare. She wasn't in a family way at all.

“Maureen…is…what?” Frank, outraged by what his older daughter's no-good boyfriend told them, slowly belted out under his breath as he slammed his fist against the table, causing

every plate and glass to tremble slightly.

“God damn it, Mark! What the fuck is wrong with you?” Maureen erupted from her seat at the table, yelling at her boyfriend with a sharp mix of anger and disbelief; tension palpable in the air. “They didn't need to hear about that!”

“You knocked up my daughter!” Frank, misunderstanding Mark's comment, venomously spat and cried as his wife, the rest of their children, and their girlfriends looked away from the man, expecting another long, incensed rant that ended with his usual well-known threat. "She’s only 18 fucking years old and she’s only been in college for four months! You've only known each other for four months! I will put you through a fucking wall!”

“Daddy, I'm not pregnant! I promise!” Maureen quickly reassured him, tears seeping out of her eyes and she turned to face her boyfriend, letting him know how pissed she was at him with her face. “It was just a scare! I thought we agreed to keep this between us, you jerk!!”

Despite the tension in the air, everyone at the table was now suddenly washed over with waves of relief, even Frank, who immediately calmed down and softened his expression. However, it was too late for him to relax completely, as he suddenly winced in discomfort as he clutched the upper part of his arm and contorted his face. "Oh," he grimaced in distress.

“Dad, are you alright?” Kevin, concern in his voice as he slowly stepped out of his seat to approach his father.

“Um, yeah…” Frank concealed, leaning himself against the table as he began to feel weaker and more lethargic. He was clammy, sweating, short of breath, and felt dizzy. The pain wasn't just in his arm; but it was also radiating in his chest, where he felt extreme tightness. In fact, he didn't tell his family he had been feeling a bit of chest pain since noon. "Oh, shit."

“Frank?” Sue muttered, looking both petrified and concerned when she noticed her husband's discomfort.

Before anyone could react, Frank collapsed onto the floor, and his entire family screamed in horror.

“Frank!”

“Dad!”

"Daddy!"

Everyone in the waiting room was completely silent. None of the Murphys even bothered to threaten Beatrice - who was still working here - to let them go back and see Frank despite the aging woman's fear of the Murphy family.

Kevin and Alice (who had to be the one to call an ambulance) were each sitting on different sides of Sue, giving her comfort. They had planned to announce their engagement at dinner, as Kevin had proposed the previous week, and they were looking forward to that moment,

but Maureen’s boyfriend just had to fuck it up. Now, they would probably have to wait until the holidays to share the exciting news. They just hoped Frank would live to see it.

Bill was pacing back and forth in the waiting area, clearly anxious, while Kim slouched in one of the chairs, sipping a crappy cup of cheap coffee the cafeteria provided. Eight-year-old Megan had fallen asleep upright in her chair. Maureen and Mark sat in chairs far apart, exchanging annoyed glances at each other.

Speaking of Mark, everyone in the family telepathically agreed that this was all that stupid prick's fault. It's only been four months, but the Murphys thought something wasn't right about Maureen's new boyfriend for reasons beyond just his extreme immaturity for a 21-year-old (and the fact that Maureen was still 17 when they started dating). The family just couldn't quite put their finger on what was off about him. Frank and Megan made it clear they despised the guy from the moment they saw him. Sue sensed that something was fishy but tried to remain open-minded despite her hesitancy. Kevin and Bill, who were very protective of their sister, were always on the lookout to ensure that Mark wouldn't hurt her, discerned that something wasn't right and always shooting him a death glare.

Goomer, on the other hand, was still lingering in the waiting room, having already overstayed his unwanted welcome and didn't go back home to Evelyn. He was chilling in one of the chairs, noisily munching on a crinkly bag of chips he had picked up from the hospital cafeteria.

Goomer's gaze wandered over to Alice, who was seated nearby and clutching onto Sue tightly, lost in her thoughts. He broke the silence when he noticed a diamond and gold ring on her left ring finger.

“Alice, is that an engagement ring?” Goomer Goomer asked with an unsettling eagerness in his voice as a grin spread on his face. "Because I hope I get to come to you and Kevin's wedding."

“Shut up, Goomer!” The Murphys and the “in-laws” chided in unison, not even acknowledging his comment about Alice’s engagement ring or her and Kevin's wedding. All of that was overshadowed by Frank's frightening heart attack.

For the record, with the exception of the Reynolds and Mr. Holtenwasser, Kevin wasn't keen on inviting anyone from the neighborhood to his wedding.

Ten minutes later, an exhausted doctor with dark circles under his eyes finally came out into the waiting area and called out, “Murphy family?”

The entire family stood up and moved closer to the doctor, fearing he would say what they dreaded. Maureen finally let Mark hold her hand again.

“How is he?” Sue pleaded desperately as Kevin and Alice let go of her. She was not ready to become a widow yet. Not today.

“We did confirm it was a myocardial infarction. Your husband is alive, but he did go into cardiac arrest and we had to use the defibrilator,” the doctor explained, terrifying and

confusing the Murphys with his medical jargon. "In simple terms, it was a heart attack that caused his heart to stop beating. We had to shock his heart to get it started again."

“But, he’s still alive and he's going to be okay, right?” Bill begged, wanting the doctor to just get to the point already.

“Yes,” the doctor nodded stoically. “But still unconscious and we are unsure what the prognosis is going to be in the long term. We have him on…”

“Jesus, just stop with the medical bullshit and just tell me if my husband is going to be okay!” Sue snapped tearfully, looking as if she was about to physically attack the doctor as her sons reached out to restrain her.

“Odds are, he will live, but he will need to change his lifestyle with diet and exercise if he doesn’t want this to happen again or if he doesn't want to live with long term complications,” warned the doctor, who also happened to be aware of the reputation of the Murphy family at this hospital through the words of Beatrice. “And also maybe go to anger management classes.”

W is For Wedding

Chapter Summary

Kevin and Alice get married.

August 6, 1983
Rustvale, PA
Temple Beth

Sue and Frank (who were now starting to get their first strands of gray hair) beamed with pride as they escorted their oldest child down the aisle toward the altar, which was adorned with a white canopy supported by four poles. Alice and her parents followed closely behind.

Lex and Rachel stood at the altar as the Best Man and Maid of Honor at the altar. Bolo, Hannah, Bill, Maureen, Daniel, and Megan were also near the aisle, serving as bridesmaids and groomsmen. Lex and the groomsmen wore matching tuxedos and yarmulkes on their heads. Rachel, in an eye-catching orange dress with short puff sleeves, stood out among the bridesmaids, who wore matching yellow dresses with the same design as Rachel's.

When Sue lovingly glanced at Kevin, who was now wearing glasses and standing with his beautiful bride, she couldn't help but be reminded of how Frank looked on their wedding day. The difference was that Frank didn't have long hair, nor did he wear a yarmulke or a tallit like Kevin was. Alice, adorned with make-up, a pearl necklace, and a two-tier veil topped with a flower headpiece, looked stunning in her wedding gown - a silk lace dress with a collar and slightly billowy, sheer long sleeves that exposed a hint of her collarbone and arms. She held a bouquet of pristine white daisies and vibrant golden mustard roses in her arms, completing her lovely, radiant appearance.

When Kevin was in the process of converting to Judaism a year ago, Frank and Sue were uncertain about how to feel. Nevertheless, they supported him anyway. Yet they once again cut Sue's parents out of their lives for good when Stan gave Kevin shit for not only being engaged to a Jewish woman but also his willingness to convert for her. Additionally, he and Marilyn disapproved of Kevin and Alice's decision to combine their last names, which went against tradition.

Sure, Stan didn't approve of his gay son or his daughter getting pregnant out of wedlock by a working-class Irish Catholic and then marrying him. However, for Sue, her father's comments toward her son and the woman he loved were the final straw. Along with learning the chilling yet tragic story of a Polish Jewish woman whom he loved and how he wished he did something similar to Frank what his father allowed to happen to Sophie, Sue was appalled and did not want to defend him anymore.

"Shalom!" Rabbi Feinstein began the sermon as everyone except Kevin, Alice, their parents, and the wedding party were seated. "We are gathered here today in the presence of God, family, and friends, to join together Alice Esther Goldman and Kevin Francis Murphy in the sacred union of marriage. We, their families and friends, form that community of love that together we may support and encourage them with our abundance of prayers and blessings on this day and for all their lives."

Kevin gripped Alice's hands into his own as Rabbi Feinstein continued to speak, reciting prayers and words in Hebrew about God. Finally, they reached the process of the Kiddush, during which Kevin and Alice drank from two cups of wine as Rabbi Feinstein recited the betrothal blessings.

Frank and Sue, along with Erwin and Rebekah Goldman, handed their eldest children their wedding bands as they continued reciting their vows. Kevin and Alice repeated every word Rabbi Feinstein asked them to say, and all of them were crying tears of joy - except for Frank, but he was still smiling.

"I, Kevin Francis Murphy, take thee, Alice Esther Goldman, to be my wife," recited Kevin word for word as he slid the ring onto Alice's finger. "To have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, in joy and sorrow, and I promise my love to you. And with this ring, I take you as my wife, for as long as we both shall live according to the law of God."

Then, it was Alice's turn.

"I, Alice Esther Goldman, take thee, Kevin Francis Murphy, to be my husband. To have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, in joy and sorrow, and I promise my love to you. And with this ring, I take you as my husband, for as long as we both shall live according to the law of God."

Neither Kevin nor Alice could hide their tears of joy as they continued their vows.

After a few silent prayers, the sheva b’rachot, and a few closing comments, it was finally time for the climax of the wedding ceremony.

“By the power vested in me, by the state of Pennsylvania, I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may now kiss. Mazel Tov!" Rabbi Feinstein declared as Kevin and Alice shared a kiss, everyone cheering them on before Kevin smashed the glass that was wrapped up in a cloth.

At the reception and after dancing the Hora, Alice and Kevin were seated in the center of the horizontal table, with their parents and siblings beside them. Lex and Rachel were also part of their seating arrangement. As expected, Lex delivered his Best Man toast, and Rachel gave her Maid of Honor speech. In addition to them, Sue, Erwin, Rebekah, Maureen, Daniel, Bolo, Bill, Hannah, and even Megan also shared toasts.

"Alice, peanut, you have blossomed into such a wonderful woman. And Kevin, you better take good care of my daughter," Erwin said as he concluded his toast as the father of the

bride. He then playfully insulted his new son-in-law, adding, "Welcome to the family, you gentile piece of shit!"

"Dad!" Alice groaned, rolling her eyes with embarrassment as Kevin's face turned red. Rebekah just sipped her champagne in one gulp while Daniel snickered under his breath.

"I'm just kidding, son," chuckled Erwin with his usual warm, hearty laugh, lightly smacking Kevin's shoulder; Kevin felt a mix of relief and embarrassment as he chuckled nervously, his face still flushed as his new father-in-law sincerely raised his glass in the air. "I truly hope you and Alice live a long and happy life together. Mazel Tov!"

When it was Frank's turn to give a toast, it was obvious to his family that he hit the champagne a bit too hard despite the cardiologist's warning about laying off alcohol and the strict new low cholesterol diet he was put on since his heart attack.

“Kevin, I'm proud of you, buddy,” praised Frank, raising his glass. “It feels like only yesterday when I was throwing footballs with you or when you nearly drowned at the bottom of a motel swimming pool...or coming out of your mother feet first.”

"Here we go," Bill muttered under his breath to his sisters and brother as he chugged down his glass of champagne. He could tell that this speech might become a bit inappropriate. Ever since his father’s heart attack on Thanksgiving, he had been more serious about not yelling as much. However, Bill knew it was only a matter of time before his father would relapse and start yelling and causing scenes again.

"Now, here you are, getting married. Seeing you grow into the man you are today has been joyful. All grown up," bubbled Frank, trying to prevent tears from leaking out. "When your mom and I got married, I had already knocked her up with you. I don't usually encourage having babies out of wedlock. But, if Alice is already pregnant, that's cool. I don't mind."

Kevin, completely mortified, planted his face into his hands, heatedly muttering that Alice wasn't pregnant and that children were not on their minds right now. Alice was also blushing, finding Frank's toast more embarrassing than her own father's. The Goldmans were shocked at Frank's words while Sue and the rest of the Murphy offspring also turned red with embarrassment.

Kevin knew his dad was definitely drunk, but at least he wasn't screaming at anybody. Still, why did he have to be such a dildo at his wedding?

"You weren't planned, and you did throw a wrench in the dreams your mother and I had. Because of you, I never got to be a pilot, but we wouldn't change anything about that as you have brought so much joy into our lives. That is, until you became a rebellious teenager, grew out your hair, cut classes, got high, flunked, and robbed a liquor store. For a while, you were a disappointment..." Frank continued, but Sue finally intervened, snatching the glass of champagne out of her husband's hand, muttering that he was cut-off from both the champagne and talking. "Jesus Christ, Sue, let me finish!"

Sue cleared her throat and frowned at Frank, refusing to give him back the shot of alcohol. She reminded him that this was Kevin and Alice's wedding, and he shouldn’t make a scene

that would ruin the day for them. She also reminded him not to humiliate her, their children, or himself again, and to avoid having another heart attack. They didn’t want a repeat of what happened at Maureen’s play back in 1974.

Frank sighed before he continued his toast, finally getting back to the heartwarming stuff. "But, Alice, you made Kevin a better person and helped him improve in a lot of ways. You make Kevin happy, and honestly, that's all I could ever ask for a daughter-in-law. You two complement each other perfectly, and I am looking forward to meeting the grandchildren you give us. And speaking of that, Kevin, be a better man and a better dad than I was. And if you're not, I will put you through a fucking wall," he teased in a light-hearted tone before picking up and raising a random glass of champagne from the table. "To Kevin and Alice!"

"To Kevin and Alice!" The rest of the guests repeated.

B is For Baby Fever

Chapter Summary

Kevin and Alice begin their journey into trying to conceive a child.

February 14, 1985
Brooklyn, NY
Kevin and Alice's Apartment

Triple Helix (formerly Merlin's Monocle, Throbinson Crusoe, and Good Vibe Harbor) was good while it lasted during its run. At each of their weddings, Kevin, Lex, Bolo, and Ben were able to play the song "I Do" at the receptions as well as the songs "Alice, My Girl", "My Cynthia", "Tammy Jean", and "Hey There, Robin" (songs each of them wrote for and about their girlfriends-turned-wives) individually. They earned some money while they played at the local restaurants and performed small concerts in every borough (Kevin himself liked to compose songs for babies and toddlers, performing at daycares like a local Raffi, something he surprisingly enjoyed doing more than performing for adults). They were even able to land some gigs outside of Long Island, even all the way west to Los Angeles.

However, because they weren't international celebrities as big as Queen or Aerosmith, being in a minor, regional rock band in a big city still didn't pay the bills very well when they had children or would-be children to provide for...even if their wives had careers that paid more. Also, they hated being apart from their wives too often and their wives weren't too keen on traveling that much.

Now that they were all married adults in the middle of their twenties with family and retirement plans (and living in different boroughs in New York City) and no longer single, childless, carefree teenagers, they began to realize the rock-and-roll lifestyle wasn't really for them given where they were in their lives. Bolo had a two-year-old son and according to him, Cindy was pregnant with their second child. Lex and Robin were expecting their first child and were due in April. Kevin and Alice were considering to try and conceive a child. Ben and Tammy had just gotten married and Ben was considering moving to Tennessee to pursue a solo career.

Therefore, now that their marriages and family were the musicians' major priorities, Triple Helix decided to break up and go their separate ways so they could focus on their family life while also searching for jobs. Right now, Kevin was working on earning his teaching certification while also working as an assistant manager at a record store and giving guitar lessons at a music school. He was hoping that he could earn a position as a music teacher once he was officially certified and after he and Alice settle into Staten Island, where they would soon be moving to over the summer.

Even in the band's early days, every member assumed they would be living a rock and roll lifestyle and bone as many chicks as they could until they were 40. However, that was proved wrong when Kevin and Alice got back together twice and when Bolo, Lex, and Ben actually found love with groupies instead of having nothing but a sexual relationship. Bolo accidentally got Cindy pregnant after a one-night stand in 1982 and then married her in a shotgun wedding. After meeting her at a gig in Ithaca, Lex met Robin again at the local synagogue and then formed a relationship with her and got married in 1984 and were now having a honeymoon baby. As for Ben, his and Tammy's relationship had evolved into something serious since they started shacking up each other in 1983...and Tammy's family also provided some source of financial stability for him and Kenny (who was thankfully no longer in diapers).

Kevin wasn't bitter or angry about how everything turned out (he was even offered a solo career as a children's musician, but despite the fulfillment he had when small children laughed at his performances, he turned it down so he could start his own family with Alice), but his band breaking apart was still kind of a sad and emotional moment since they had been performing together and writing songs for twelve years. However, he was excited to begin his new journey in his life - and also have lots of sex for a while - of having maybe one or two children with Alice.

He also couldn't wait to sing and strum the songs he wrote for babies and toddlers to his own children someday.

According to the probable calculations and the medical textbooks about conception and what was going on down there, Alice was ovulating, so now was one of the best times to impregnate her. She was off her birth control pills and Kevin was no longer using condoms.

"So, are you ready to make a baby?" Kevin whispered seductively as he was completely naked and on top of Alice in their bed, set in the missionary position. Both of them had taken off their glasses and candles were lit all around their room.

"Oh, yes," purred Alice, running her thumb under Kevin's chin, eager to create Little Kevin or Little Alice as they shared passionate kisses and touched each other all over, arousing each other as the romantic music was playing. "I'm very excited for you to knock me up."

Kevin then remembered when they almost did it for the first time around Christmas a decade ago and Alice asked him for a rubber...and then her father walked in on them and made him miss (and they later realized they got lucky because the condom had a hole in it). He also remembered when they panicked back in 1975 and thought they were pregnant before being relieved that it was a false alarm, which motivated Alice to go on birth control so they could have all the sex they wanted without worrying about an accidental pregnancy.

Now, it actually felt awesome to be having sex while also trying to produce a child that would be born out of love and was wanted and planned for on their own terms when they were ready.

Still, it felt weird to actively be trying to procreate. Well, to Kevin, it was, given that he and his siblings were all just accidental yet expected results from having sex...and the fact that his parents didn't have the option of so many FDA-approved options of birth control around the

time he was born. Hell, once Megan was born, his mother fought the doctors of Rustvale tooth and nail to get her tubes tied.

"Here comes the airplane," announced Kevin in a charming tone before penetrating himself into Alice, hoping he was successful in producing a child.

C is For Called Off

Chapter Summary

Maureen breaks off her engagement to Mark.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

January 21, 1986
Cambridge, MA
Maureen's Apartment

On her walk back to her off-campus studio apartment in the freezing weather after finishing her shift at work, Maureen eyed the shape of the silver carat ring under the tan glove on her right hand as she took a drag from her cigarette. Hopefully, things would get better once she and Mark would be married over Spring Break and eventually when they would have children.

Her parents were proud of her for many things - straight As, graduating high school early, going to MIT on a scholarship, and doing a part-time work-study program with the National Science Foundation.

However, the one thing Frank and Sue were not proud of her for was her dating and being engaged to her college boyfriend, Mark MacAllister.

Seriously, what wasn't there to like about Mark? He was an MIT graduate. He was a PhD student. He had a decent-paying job. He came from a very well-off family. He was charming. He was cute.

Hell, she dated Philip Bonfiglio (whose mom was a pain in the ass to every girl her sons dated) as a freshman and sophomore in high school when he was an upperclassman and Frank was more tolerant of that when Bill was (since he didn't like the idea of his best friend dating his younger sister). When she briefly dated Quincy Vanderheim during her last two years of high school, Frank loved the guy and treated him like a third son even though his mother was a well-known local prostitute, and they broke up because he turned out gay. Even after that, her father still liked Quincy.

Still, her parents had complete disdain for Mark...and so did all of her siblings and her sister-in-law, and even her friends. Well, they all liked him (well, Frank still put on the protective father role he always did since Maureen started dating) when Maureen told them she was seeing someone...and then disliked him once they met him. During every family get together, Frank always gave Mark the stink-eye and Kevin and Bill were always keeping a watchful eye on him, ready to defend their little sister when he hurts her.

"Princess, can't you see that he's a fucking prick?" Her father's voice said.

"I'm sure you love him, sweetie. But I don't think he is a good person," said her mother's voice.

"Why do you let him act like such a dildo to you?" Kevin's voice said.

"How can you put up with this jerk?" Alice's voice said.

"He is such an asshole, Maureen," said Bill's voice.

"He sucks," said Megan's voice...and she was only eleven.

"I think you're making a big mistake," her friend Angela's voice said.

Still, Maureen never stopped coming to Mark's defense whenever a friend or family member criticized him.

Sure, Mark could be immature, hot-headed, short-tempered, and maybe a bit of a control freak, but Maureen knew he loved her and that he was trying to be a better person.

When they announced their engagement over winter break and that the wedding was in three months, Frank thankfully didn't have another heart attack like he did when Mark made him misunderstand Maureen having a pregnancy scare.

Still, Frank and Sue did assume their daughter was pregnant at first since they were suspicious of Mark proposing and rushing into a marriage when she still had a semester of college left. In fact, Sue was the most adamant that Maureen (and she had the same expectations of the rest of her children) would finish college before she would get married since she still had grad school to think about.

"You know, you don't have to have a baby if you're not ready. Your generation has options that I didn't have," reminded Sue, referring to abortion. "You can finish your education first."

"Mom, for the last time, I'm not pregnant! Jesus!" Maureen snapped, hating that someone would automatically assume pregnancy just because someone was getting married before finishing school. "We're just in love!"

Maureen would also point out to her family that Kevin and Bill weren't that far off when they were teenagers...except they would remind her that Kevin and Bill were no longer teenagers and were now different people...unlike Mark, who still acted like a teenager despite being older than Maureen and never took responsibility for his actions.

Her brain drifted back to reality when she glared up at the night sky and threw her cigarette on the cold, wet concrete and then smashed it to bits with her boot to put it out. However, she was not prepared for what she would see when she walked in.

When Maureen opened the door to her and Mark's apartment, the image presented on their cheap paisley blue couch was something she couldn't unsee.

"Mark? What the hell!" Maureen shrieked, her heart pounding as she examined the heartbreaking scene in front of her.

"Oh, my god! Maureen!" Mark yelped as his completely naked body scooted toward the right side of the couch; an attractive, young blonde woman (she was probably a couple years younger than Maureen) using the blanket to cover up her nude body. "You're home early," he chuckled awkwardly, not even bothering to put on his pants as his genitals were completely uncovered, confirming Maureen's suspicions to be 100%.

"No, I'm not!" She scowled, hurt and taken aback. "It's 8:30, and you know I always come home around this time! And who the fuck is this homewrecker?"

"You didn't tell me you were married!" The woman angrily yelled at Mark.

"Um...this is Cheryl. Cheryl, this is Maureen. My...roommate," Mark answered the question before he tried to come up with convincing words to say to his fiancée, but Maureen could tell that he knew he was in big trouble now that he had been caught. There was no alternative explanation for two people completely naked on the couch with a box of condoms lying on the floor nearby.

Even the mistress didn't find Mark's excuses plausible.

"Roommate?" Maureen scoffed angrily. "I'm his fiancée!"

"You know what, I should go," Cheryl awkwardly got herself dressed and grabbed her stuff before walking out of the apartment, looking at Maureen apologetically. "I'm very sorry about this."

Once Mark and Maureen were alone, Mark struggled to come up with a believable excuse as he put on some tighty whiteys and plaid red robe.

"It's not what it looks like, babe," he stammered.

"Don't you try to fool me!" Maureen scowled, tears stinging her eyes. "It is exactly what I think it is!"

"I love you, Maureen, you must believe me. I love you," Mark, still half-naked, pleaded and trembled.

"Get the fuck out of here!" Maureen screamed, grabbing one of her textbooks out of her bag and then throwing it at him, followed by more of his belongings as she cornered him out the door in the cold weather. "It's over! I never want to see you again!"

Once Mark and most of his things (as well as a warm change of clothes since Maureen still didn't want him to freeze to death) were out the door and he was staring up at her from the sidewalk, begging for a second chance, a sobbing Maureen slipped the engagement ring off her finger and then threw it far into the parking lot.

Once Mark was gone and completely out of sight, Maureen dialed her parents' phone number, desperately needing someone to talk to.

Her family was right. Mark was a piece of shit and she had been denying it for far too long. Other than him causing her father to have a heart attack, all of the moments where he was a terrible person were coming back in hindsight.

She defended him when he said her senior thesis sucked and also all the times he insulted her in any way. She defended him when he said her father was nothing but a baggage handler bum. She defended him when he made a creepy remark about her mother's body about how sexy she looked after having four kids. She defended him when he said that Megan sucked in the Christmas play she was in. She defended him when Bill lost his cool and told him to fuck off and stop calling his, Kevin's, and their parents' home phone numbers every five minutes to ask what she was doing and to leave her alone. She even defended him when he told Kevin after his conversion "how much it must suck for him to have to be Jewish now since he can't eat bacon", especially in front of Alice.

She always regretted the last one when she didn't stand up for her brother and her sister-in-law (even her mother was disappointed in her for that one after how much of a hard time Pop-Pop and even relatives on both sides of Kevin and Alice's families gave them for marrying outside their faith), and now, she was 100% done defending him.

Sandwiching the handset between her ear and her shoulder, she twirled her fingers through the spiraled wire as she listened to the ringing on the other end, hoping her parents were awake.

Frank and Sue were startled awake by the phone ringing on the nightstand that sat on Sue's side of the bed.

"Jesus Christ! Who would be calling in the middle of the night!" Frank grumbled, rubbing his eyes. "Somebody better be dying!"

Sue, hoping it wasn't a couple of teenagers prank-calling them again (last week, they got a prank-call telling them Frank left his underwear at another woman's house), immediately reached her arm for the phone and picked it up, putting it against her ear.

"Hello?" She groggily replied.

"Mom?"

Sue immediately shot up to sit up straight when she heard her daughter's distressed voice. "Maureen? Why are you...Honey, what's wrong? Did Mark hurt you?"

Once Frank realized who was calling, he set aside his grumpy mood and decided to listen in, sitting himself upright in the bed.

"I broke things off with Mark," Maureen mewled on the other end.

Frank wanted to shout with excitement at that news, but he could understand that Maureen was hurting right now based on how worried Sue was.

"Why?" Sue asked, secretly happy that Maureen wouldn't be marrying Mark after all but also putting on her sympathetic tone.

"He cheated on me," clarified Maureen. *"I came home from work and he was fucking another woman on our couch."*

"Oh, sweetie," sighed Sue pitifully as she rubbed her temples. "I'm so sorry. Your father's awake. Would you like to talk to him?"

"Yeah," Maureen sniffled on the other end as Sue handed the phone over to Frank.

"Hey, princess. How are you doing?" Frank queried, rubbing his eyes. "Is everything okay?"

"You were right. Mark is a prick. I just caught him with another woman," lamented Maureen, sobbing her eyes out. *"I should have listened to all of you, but I kept being stupid, thinking he would change for the better."*

"I know, princess, but you'll be alright. There are plenty of other much better fish in the sea," sighed Frank before soothingly speaking to her. "But you can tell Mark that if I ever run into him, I will put him through a fucking wall."

Maureen chuckled a little bit at her father's words. *"Thanks, Dad."*

Chapter End Notes

I hope you have been enjoying this so far. Please review and let me know what you think.

I is For Infertile

Chapter Summary

Kevin and Alice learn that their chances of having a baby are slim.

November 13, 1987
Staten Island, NY
Staten Island Fertility Clinic

Kevin and Alice sat across from the doctor on the other side of his desk in his office, clutching each other's hands tightly as they had been waiting for the results of the invasive, uncomfortable series of tests for over an hour.

They had been trying to conceive a child for two years - part of it even involved them having sex in the bathroom at their high school reunion before eventually getting caught by an aging Mr. Morgan - but nothing had happened yet, so they knew it was probably time to see why.

"Let's cut to the chase. How do I put this," the doctor sighed somberly as he ran his fingers through his hair. "Mrs. Goldman-Murphy, we couldn't find anything wrong with you. To be frank, your husband is the infertile one."

"What?" Kevin's heart sank as he heard the doctor's blunt words. "What do you mean?"

"Mr. Goldman-Murphy, your sperm count is very low," explained the doctor. "It's why you two haven't been able to conceive despite having unprotected sex for two years."

"So, what happens now?" Alice, her emotions and dreams of motherhood crushed, asked meekly.

"Well, it is still possible for you two to conceive naturally, but the chances are still low," sighed the doctor as he fiddled with his pen. "If you want to increase your chances, I recommend unprotected sex regularly. However, it could take years before something happens. I'm sorry."

Tears began to roll down both Kevin and Alice's faces when the news sank in. Even when the doctor recommended alternative options like IVF and sperm donation and ways Kevin could increase his sperm count, it still didn't make them feel better. In fact, he wasn't even ready to even use someone else's sperm to impregnate his wife (and the thought of that felt uneasy)...and the fact that there were issues with his plumbing felt pretty emasculating.

It was bad enough that both of their parents kept harping on them about giving them a grandbaby (even Frank was begging for a grandchild and told Kevin he wasn't trying hard enough). They didn't know what they were going to tell them.

"He said it was still possible," reassured Alice on the quiet ride home as she still clung to a little bit of hope. The doctor also suggested the possibility of IVF with a sperm donor and maybe freezing many samples of Kevin's sperm if they still wanted to have a biological child from both ends, but their insurance didn't cover it and it would cost a lot of money. "We can still try."

Kevin, however, was devastated and did not respond or say a word during the drive home. He did ask the doctor what could have caused this, but all he said was that since the tests revealed nothing structurally wrong with Kevin's reproductive organs, he was just unlucky. However, he did say it could be attributed to lifestyle choices or environmental factors.

Still, both of them were devastated. They both wanted a child so badly.

When they got home and collapsed on the couch, all they could do was comfort each other when Kevin was the first one to break down crying. The fact that he couldn't get someone pregnant made him feel like a failure and that he had let Alice down.

That night, Kevin mentally prepared himself for what to say as he called his parents, mostly wanting to talk to his father. The two of them grew apart during the teen years, but they once again grew closer when Kevin reached his twenties. Now, the only thing they would fight about was politics.

"Hello?" Sue was the first to answer.

"Hi, Mom," Kevin sighed as he played with the phone's spiraled cord.

"Kevin, honey? Is everything alright?" Sue asked her son with concern.

"Yeah, um. Can I talk to Dad, please," Kevin begged, his voice breaking. "Is he home? Or is he in the garage punching his speed bag?"

"No, he's here," said Sue. *"We just finished dinner. I'll get him."*

A moment later, the phone was transferred to Frank. *"Hey, son,"* he said apathetically. *"What's up?"*

"Well, you know, Alice and I have been having trouble getting pregnant," Kevin began to tear up, and he couldn't believe he was telling his father this. "And, the reason why...it's because I have a low sperm count. Alice can easily get pregnant, but I don't have enough swimmers in my balls."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Kevin," Frank sighed, feeling a bit uncomfortable with where this conversation was going. *"Should I get your mother and Megan? Do we need to tell them together?"*

"No," Kevin shook his head. "You can tell them yourself. Alice is telling her parents tomorrow. I just called you because it's hard to deal with right now."

"Again, I'm sorry, buddy. I was really hoping you would have a little ingrate of your own," joked Frank. *"Your mom and I knew you would make a good father since we saw how nurturing you were with Megan."*

"There is still a small chance for me and Alice," reassured Kevin, trying to stay optimistic and hopeful. "We're still going to try, but it's going to take a long time. The only good thing is that we'll be having lots of sex. You don't realize what I had to do to get my sperm tested. Seriously, they made me take a cup and a *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit magazine into the bathroom so I could..."

"Okay, okay," cringed Frank on the other end, already telling where this was going. *"Don't give me the details."*

C is For Cat

Chapter Summary

Kevin and Alice get a cat.

December 19, 1987
Staten Island, NY
Kevin and Alice's Apartment

It had been a month since Kevin and Alice were told the devastating news that they would probably never have children. They told both of their parents and their siblings, who were all devastated and sad for them.

Still, Kevin and Alice weren't giving up hope just yet as they continued to have lots of sex whenever they could. Kevin also tried many of the recommended ways from the urologist to possibly increase his sperm count - he stopped having one beer or glass of wine every night, quit smoking (although that was a slow and difficult process), ate foods rich in antioxidants and folate, exercised regularly, avoided chemicals whenever he could, wore loose-fitting underwear, and even sat in cold water and put bags from the freezer or ice packs on his crotch to increase the temperature in his pants.

Today was also the first day of the holiday break and the fifth day of Hanukkah for them, which provided them with the perfect time frame to have lots of sex. Alice's parents were also currently visiting them for Hanukkah, which was also going to make their plan trickier since they were staying in the spare bedroom - a room they were hoping to one day turn into a baby's room.

Alice was alone in the apartment getting the food prepped for tonight's celebration at the synagogue while her parents were spending most of the day exploring Manhattan. Kevin, on the other hand, was doing shopping for Christmas gifts for when they would drive to Rustvale to see his parents and siblings.

As Alice put the sealed-up container of potato latkes in the fridge, Kevin immediately walked through the door.

"Are your parents still not back yet?" He asked.

"Nope, not yet," she sighed as her eyes focused on the mess of dirty dishes and utensils in their kitchen sink. Oddly, within the sound of ruffling shopping and grocery bags, Alice swore she heard a faint meow. "Kevin, did you just hear a cat or is it just me?"

"Yes, I did," Kevin stated with proud confidence as his wife turned around to face him, only to notice that he had grocery bags in one hand and a small pet carrier in the other. "Because I got us a cat."

"What?" Alice was shocked, yet also kind of delighted and excited. "When?"

"A few days ago, I went to the shelter and picked out a cat," explained Kevin as he set the carrier and grocery bags down on the floor and kneeled down next to the mewling cage. "Today was the day I was going to bring him home and I wanted to surprise you. We needed some good in our lives after, you know."

"Yekiri, I wish you discussed this with me first, but I would like to meet this new addition to the family," Alice chuckled as she kneeled down next to the carrier, the joy of a new pet outweighing her mild annoyance at Kevin for making a big decision without her.

"Alright, buddy, this is your new home," cooed Kevin as he opened the little door to the carrier, allowing a tiny black kitten to slowly emerge, stretching and observing his surroundings.

"Hello, there, dude, it's okay," gushed Alice as she ran her hand over the kitten's tiny back before picking him up to cuddle and give him a kiss on the top of his head. "Oh, Kevin. He's so cute."

Kevin wrapped his arms around Alice and then gave her a kiss on the lips as he gently scratched the kitten's tiny head, leading him to purr affectionately.

"What should we name him?" Kevin asked as he continued to stroke the kitten's fur.

"How about Frodo? Would that work?" Alice suggested as she immediately thought of *Lord of the Rings* and The Shire of Frodo, which was her and Kevin's meet cute.

"You know what, I think that would suit him just fine," chuckled Kevin. "Also, can you please help me unload the rest of the car? I still have cat food and a some more stuff for him in the trunk."

"Of course," said Alice.

R is For Rivalry

Chapter Summary

Maureen and Scott talk about what they have been up to.

Chapter Notes

As you have noticed, I have changed the title name and the summary. I did that because I originally planned this to be a long one-shot of the Murphys on New Years Eve of 1999 with Frank and Sue reflecting the past 25 years in great detail...but then I had a better idea.

So, I updated the summary and title to make it more accurate to what this fic really is - a multi-chapter fic of snippets of what happened to the Murphy children after the finale.

Anyway, I hope you all enjoy.

October 28, 1988
Stanford, CA
Joe's Tavern and Pizzeria

"Another margarita, please," sighed Maureen as she ordered a drink at the bar of Joe's Tavern and Pizzeria. The restaurant was full of couples, friend groups, and families on dates and hangouts, except she was one of the few people sitting alone at the bar as she closed her eyes and wasted away into Margaritaville.

She hasn't gone on one date since she broke off her engagement to Mark a couple of years ago after she caught him cheating and kicked him out of their apartment. Her parents told her there were plenty of other much better fish in the sea, but it felt like all of the good men were taken. She almost hit it off on David the bartender until he told her he was married.

However, being single didn't bother her that much and she was okay with the bachelorette life. Instead of finding a man, she was more focused on finishing her education and getting her PhD. Still, she really did want to raise a family someday while also having a career.

Maureen remembered back to the time she was a little girl and teenager, when the feminist movement had risen and how many women (including her mother) refused to be demoted to nothing but a housewife and mother. Also, unlike her mother's generation, she had more opportunities and rights. While Maureen had no interest in being a housewife or a stay-at-

home mom and was more focused on her career and education right now (and was also known to reject many feminine things), she still wanted to have a baby someday and be a mother...but not until her career was finished and she found the right man.

Speaking of her childhood, she now found herself running into Scott Ichikawa, her academic rival and an old acquaintance from Rustvale throughout her school years, once again as he sat down two seats away from her at the bar, ordering a drink for himself.

"Can I get a Samuel Adams, please," Scott asked David, the bartender.

"Great, you again," huffed Maureen as she sucked hard on the straw of her beverage, really wanting to get even more drunk right now.

Scott just scoffed and rolled his eyes as he waited for the beer he ordered.

The two of them were in the computer club and science club together and played the leads in a school play once, and they also graduated high school early the same year, with both of them fighting for the salutatorian role. Despite the other guys in computer club saying they just imagined her and Scott dating because of their similarities, that never happened because they butted heads way too much.

Now, six years later, they coincidentally happened to be in the same doctoral aerospace engineering program at Stanford. Once again, their rivalry brewed. They were constantly competing for their professors' attention and also competing academically in almost everything.

"So, what have you been up to?" Scott finally broke the silence between the two of them as he moved to the stool that was right next to Maureen, who refused to face him and kept her back toward him.

"Are you trying to brag about how much better your personal life is than mine?" Maureen grumbled and exhaled loudly through her nose, running her finger along the salted rim of her glass.

"No," Scott sighed, his tone sounding more genuine. "I...I really am curious about how life is treating you."

"Really?" Maureen finally turned to face Scott. "You are?"

"Yeah," said Scott genuinely. "Enough with us being rivals. It's kind of silly and stupid."

Maureen finally smiled at Scott. "That is true."

"So, how is your family?" Scott asked as he received his beer from the bartender and thanked him. "How are Megan and your brothers?"

"They're fine," sighed Maureen before sharing the status of her siblings. "My parents say Megan is turning into Kevin 2.0. Bill is still single and still lives in Rustvale. He did have this

girlfriend, but they broke up. Kevin is married and he lives in New York. He is still with Alice Goldman. You know, Daniel Goldman's sister?"

"They're still together? That's nice," commented Scott merrily. "I bet they have some cute babies right now."

"Nope, Kevin is still trying and failing at knocking her up...but I hope it happens," replied Maureen. "Anyway, how is your family? How is Lori?"

"They're good. Lori lives in Seattle. She's been working as a data entry clerk, but my parents keep asking her when she is going to get married," answered Scott solemnly. "My obaasan...uh, my grandmother...is moving in with my parents. Her Alzheimer's is getting worse, and being in a nursing home with a roommate keeps bringing back her memories of Manzanar. My parents also lived through that in the 40s, so they think it's better for her to stay with them."

"I'm so sorry," pitied Maureen, who unfortunately didn't learn the entire horrible truth about the internment of Japanese-Americans until she was in college. In fact, there were a lot of lies she learned in history class.

"So, do you have a boyfriend?" Scott asked, his tone shifting back to cheerful curiosity.

"Nope. I did have a fiancé two years ago, but we broke up when I caught him cheating. He was a dick anyway," explained Maureen, shuddering at the mention of Mark. "What about you?"

"Nah," Scott shook his head. "I was in a serious relationship for three years, but we broke up last year. Now, I spend my Saturdays moto-crossing and spending my Saturday nights watching *Saturday Night Live* instead."

"Oh, my god! I love *Saturday Night Live* ," Maureen beamed enthusiastically. "Gilda Radner is awesome."

"Yeah, she is so funny," Scott laughed, agreeing with Maureen. "She's such a strong woman with what she is going through. Ovarian cancer must suck."

The two of them continued their conversations about their likes, dislikes, family life, aerospace engineering, and all of their childhood memories until the restaurant closed.

D is For Date

Chapter Summary

Maureen asks Scott out on a date.

December 16, 1988
Stanford, CA
Stanford University Campus

The fall semester was coming to a close at Stanford University as the students were finishing their final exams, qualifying exams, and research projects before the holiday break, especially Maureen, whose last final was in environmental engineering. In January, she was going to be heading to Washington D.C. for a month for a paid research opportunity with the NSA, which she was looking forward to.

She and Scott were enjoying each other as friends, often going out for drinks, dinner, and the movies. Their friends kept asking if they were going out as boyfriend and girlfriend, but they both, as usual, denied it and said everything was platonic and there wasn't even anything sexual. In fact, Angela and Michelle, Maureen's best friends from MIT who also coincidentally ended up in California like she did, kept telling her that she should ask Scott out whenever they visited her.

In spite of the pestering and teasing from her friends, Maureen secretly did have romantic feelings for Scott deep down and found herself to be in love with him. However, she was nervous about making a move because she was afraid of both him rejecting her and their parents not approving because of their differences in racial background. She knew her siblings definitely wouldn't mind, but she wasn't sure about her parents, especially her father.

Sure, her parents loved and adored their Jewish daughter-in-law and accepted that their son converted for her, but they still felt uneasy about their son rejecting his Catholic upbringing and Kevin mentioned that it did take a while for Alice's father to warm up to him and accept his daughter settling down with a gentile. Also, she was aware of all the criticism and even somewhat nasty comments Kevin and Alice got from a few relatives on both sides of their families and from people in Rustvale from both the Catholics and Jewish community.

However, unlike Scott, Alice was still white with European ancestry. Still, despite that, Grandpa Stan and Grandma Marilyn liked her until it was mentioned to them that she wasn't a Protestant or even a Christian (and the fact that her grandparents came from Russia). Also, since Scott was Japanese, Maureen knew for sure that her grandparents wouldn't have approved of him either...and the fact that her father has thrown out the phrase "fucking Japanese piece of shit" a few times kind of confirmed her fears.

Little did Maureen know, Scott had mutual feelings for her and similar fears and concerns about asking her out since his own parents expected him to marry a nice Japanese-American woman.

Once Maureen turned in her exam, collected her purse and textbooks, and left the room, she heard a familiar voice call out to her.

"Hey, Maureen," the voice greeted, revealing it to be Scott, recently back from Vancouver after being there for four weeks for a research project in renewable energy. He was waiting outside the classroom, leaning against the wall of the hall as he had been waiting for her to finish her exam.

"Jesus, Scott," gasped Maureen, who nearly dropped her textbooks before her voice shifted to a more bubbly tone. "Were you waiting here for me the whole time?"

"Yes, I was," confirmed Scott, smiling as he adjusted the backpack that was only being hung on his back with one strap. "I figured that since we're all finished for the semester, we could hang out for a celebratory lunch."

"Lunch?" Maureen chuckled as she and Scott walked side-by-side down the hallway. "It's 2:00 in the afternoon."

"Well, it's twelve o'clock somewhere," retorted Scott jestingly, gently clapping her on the back.

The two of them continued to have a pleasant conversation as they made their way out of the campus building and then sat on a nearby bench outside.

"You will never guess what I heard about Amy Jenkins," Maureen remarked, remembering everything she learned about old classmates and acquaintances from Bill when she spent Thanksgiving in Rustvale.

"Let me guess. Did her husband get so bored with her that she got a botched boob job and now her knockers are messed up for life?" Scott joked, scoffing playfully, remembering that Amy got married and pregnant right out of high school to her obnoxious, jerk-ass boyfriend whose parents were part of this religious cult that valued having a dozen children. In fact (and Maureen was aware of this), he did briefly date her in high school, only to break things off with her when he realized she was only doing it to see what it was like to do it with an Asian man. "Is she on her seventh child?"

"Well, Bill told me that he saw her walking into the abortion clinic that she and her husband often picket. A guy he works with, his wife is a nurse there, and she said she was here for an abortion," informed Maureen as she adjusted her glasses on her face.

"How ironic!" Scott cackled, as he was aware that Amy's mother was known for being the Phyllis Schlafly of Rustvale. "I wonder what the story is."

"Bill said that she had an affair with another man," explained Maureen before huffing in disgust at Amy's hypocritical values and actions, yet still shocked that someone who called themselves "pro-life" supported executing certain groups of people to supposedly stop the spread of AIDS...and Maureen knew that wouldn't really do anything to help find. "He also saw her holding a protest there days later."

The pair were silent for a while as they continued walking across campus before Maureen finally decided to make a move on Scott.

"Look, Scott," she sighed, nervously running her hands through her hair as she struggled to get her words out. "Um...I really like you. More than just a friend. Do you want to..."

Maureen gulped hard, taking a minute to collect herself before timidly finishing her sentence.

"Do you want to...go out on..." Maureen took a deep breath, avoiding eye contact with Scott before blurting out the last intended word. "On a date?"

Maureen smiled cautiously as she waited impatiently for Scott's answer, finally glad to get that out of her system.

"I would love to," Scott beamed, sighing with relief as he had also been pondering asking her out. "I was going to ask you at lunch. And now that you already asked me, are you going back to Rustvale for the holidays?"

"Yeah," sighed Maureen glumly.

"I'm guessing you're not looking forward to another fight between your dad and Kevin?" Scott predicted, remembering the few times he witnessed Frank Murphy yell at people and get into shouting matches with others. In fact, he would never forget the day Frank embarrassed his family by screaming at and punching his father at the school play. He never told Maureen or her brothers and sister this, but he always felt sorry for the Murphy kids for having a father who yelled at them in public.

"Nope, I am not. I mean, they get along better than they used to, except when it comes to politics," said Maureen, remembering once again that there was recently a presidential election and that Thanksgiving dinner was almost ruined because of a heated argument between Frank and Kevin that happened because Kevin just had to bring up how the rape question that was asked during one of the debates was out of line.

To be fair, all of Frank's children (and even Sue most of the time) disagreed with him politically. That was made clear to him when Kevin and Bill voted for Jimmy Carter in 1980 and Maureen voted for Walter Mondale in 1984. However, Kevin was always the one who he would get into heated arguments about it with; always starting with one of them making a remark about a politician and then the other biting back before Alice and Sue would shut the shit down. On the other hand, political arguments Frank would have started with Bill or Maureen were stopped when his children would quickly change the subject.

"At least one of them is probably going to bring up the election. I know it," vented Maureen, not really wanting to think about politics anymore.

"Well, maybe we should have our date there," suggested Scott as he got back on the topic of their date. "I heard that Sam's Starving Boy is still there. Maybe we could eat there...and maybe we could meet our families."

"I would love that," consented Maureen happily, taking Scott's hand into hers before sharing her fears. "But what if your parents don't like me? What if my parents don't like you?"

"Well, let's just see what happens," shrugged Scott. "It doesn't hurt to try. Also, if they don't like us, we can always tell them to go fuck themselves."

Maureen snickered as she leaned her head closer towards Scott and kissed him on the cheek with a quick peck. She instantly turned red with embarrassment as she kind of regretted her action. "I'm sorry. I don't know why I just did that."

"It's okay," chuckled Scott as he pulled Maureen into an embrace and moved his face closer to his, giving her a smitten smile. "I was going to kiss you back. Also, it is a date, isn't it?"

Maureen smiled in return before they both moved in to give each other a mutual kiss on the lips.

T is For Teenager

Chapter Summary

Frank (and Kevin) deal with a teenage Megan.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

February 9, 1989
Rustvale, PA
The Murphy House

Frank loved his youngest child, but right now, he wanted to put his 14-year-old through a fucking wall. To be fair, he had those feelings about his older three children during their teen years, Kevin being the most difficult. However, he didn't expect Megan to be just as challenging as Kevin was.

Just like Kevin during his early teen years, she was foul-mouthed, short-tempered, lazy, and a troublemaker with a terrible hairstyle who played her records at full volume, cut class, and wore her brother's trademark vest (which Kevin gifted to her when he went off to college).

In simple terms, Megan was Kevin with boobs.

Frank and Sue knew she would eventually grow out of it just as Kevin, Bill, and Maureen did...but after having no teenagers living in the house since 1982, Megan becoming a teenager made Frank anticipate an empty nest even more.

Especially right now, since they learned that Megan had been suspended when Sue caught her and her friend Heather hanging out at the movies at 10:00 am on a Thursday. It wasn't just the fact that she was suspended that enraged Sue and Frank, but also the reason she was suspended - smoking in the bathroom. That was also coupled with the fact that her grades were slipping.

"What the fuck were you thinking, Megan?" Frank fumed as he and Sue stared down at Megan, who was sitting on the couch, with their arms crossed. "I can't believe you got suspended! And you're failing half of your classes! And now you're smoking?"

"I wasn't doing anything in the bathroom! And it's just one time!" Megan scoffed loudly, rolling her eyes. "Kevin got suspended 40 times."

"What?" Frank's thoughts were temporarily off of Megan and were now on his nearly 30-year-old son. Although Kevin being suspended a lot didn't surprise him, hearing that as a

straight-up fact and also the fact that Kevin never told him was a bit of a bombshell. "God damn it! That lying little..."

"Frank!" Sue hissed at her husband, trying to keep the topic on Megan.

"Oh, right," grumbled Frank as he adjusted his glasses before continuing to scold Megan. "Anyway, don't change the subject. This is about you, not your brother."

"Mom, you're such a hypocrite!" Megan yelled. "You and Dad smoke all the time and so do Kevin, Bill, and Maureen! Also, that was my first cigarette, I swear! It was Heather's idea! I didn't even have a chance to light it before that barf bag of a teacher ruined everything!"

Sue pinched her nose as she stared at the floor, trying to come up with the right words to respond to Megan since she did have a point. She didn't like that her three oldest children smoked cigarettes, but they were adults and there was nothing she could do about it. She also knew that smoking was bad, but it was a habit she kept trying and failing to quit.

"Well, it is illegal for *you* to smoke, young lady!" Frank bellowed as he continued to raise his voice at Megan. "You're 14-years-old! And the fact you lied about being suspended is a fucking disgrace! Not to mention that you're failing half your classes! God forbid if you have to go to summer school this year!"

"Gag me with a spoon," Megan spat venomously and sarcastically, crossing her arms.

"Hey!" Frank jabbed his finger at Megan as he continued to yell. "Tell me that again and I will put you through a fucking wall! You have no respect, and I've had it with your shitty attitude! Starting tomorrow, you are grounded for a month!"

"Well, I fucking hate you!" Megan screamed at full volume as she roughly stood up from the couch and then stomped away toward her room, slamming the door shut.

Frank was immediately taken aback and hurt by Megan's words. Sure, it wasn't the first time one of his kids told him that, but it was still a painful feeling whenever he was told that.

He buried his hands in his face as he tried to figure out what they would do next.

"Frank?" Sue asked softly, reaching her arm out toward him.

"Not now, Susan," he breathed heavily. "I need a minute."

"Fuuuck you," Megan muttered slowly and quietly as she flipped off her father with both of her middle fingers behind her closed bedroom door once she sat down on her bed, pulled out her journal, and read her most recent entries.

Dear Journal,

Mr. Durkin is a barf bag. He narced on me and Heather to the principal when he caught us smoking in the bathroom and now we've been suspended. Why was he even in the girls' bathroom? Such a creep!

Dear Journal,

My mom's a barf bag. She caught me and Heather hanging out at the movies and then narced on me to my dad.

Grabbing her pen from her nightstand, she added another entry, gliding the ink aggressively onto the paper.

Dear Journal,

My dad's a barf bag. Now, I'm grounded.

Closing her journal shut, Megan reached for the phone on her nightstand and dialed Kevin and Alice's home phone number, hoping her brother would pick up. She didn't care if her father or someone else in the neighborhood heard her over the party line or if her father would get pissed at her for racking up the phone bill.

"Hello?" Her brother's disembodied voice on the other end answered.

"Hi, Kevin," sighed Megan as she held the handset against her ear. "I wish Mom and Dad would get off my fucking back."

"What happened this time?" Kevin asked, sounding more annoyed instead of happy to talk to his sister.

"I got suspended for smoking in the bathroom," grumbled Megan. "Mom and Dad found out and now I'm grounded. They won't stop harping on me for failing. And when am I ever going to use algebra? Also, grades aren't even a measure of intelligence."

"That's true, but they can sometimes be a measure of discipline," said Kevin sternly, which was a shock to Megan. *"Look, just attend your classes and do your assignments. Trust me, you do not want to go to summer school. Also, you are too young to be smoking. You're in eighth grade."*

"You smoke," Megan scoffed, as she was in complete disbelief that her brother was now talking to her like Mom and Dad. "You smoked when you were my age."

"Just because I did it doesn't mean I should be okay with you doing it! I haven't had a cigarette for over a year!" Kevin snapped. *"Yeah, that's right! I'm actually trying to quit because I'm trying to increase my sperm count and I also want to live long enough to see what my future children grow up to be!"*

Megan was shocked at her brother's tone, almost sounding just like their father.

"I'm sorry, Megan," sighed Kevin. *"I've had headaches and nausea since I quit smoking and my fifth grade class was just so terrible today. Still, Mom and Dad are right. You need to apply yourself."*

"What? Now you're on their side?" Megan groaned.

"Well, what did you expect to hear from a teacher who is married to a teacher?" Kevin groused. *"Look, it's been a rough day and Alice and I are just trying to eat dinner. Goodnight."*

Slamming the phone down onto the switch hook once she heard the busy noise, Megan picked up her pen and then started another entry in her journal.

Dear Journal,

My brother Kevin is a barf bag.

Back at the Goldman-Murphy apartment one state away, Alice had gone to bed early after grading papers while Kevin was still awake in the living room, channel surfing while munching on saltines and coming across Father Jimmy Fitzsimmons' annoying regional televangelist commercial again. Now that Jimmy Fitzsimmons was a regional household name, nobody back in Rustvale could use him as a scapegoat anymore.

"Fucking fifth graders. Stupid dildos," he muttered, still pissed about what happened with the fifth grade today. First, a student gave him an attitude when he asked her to stop passing notes in the middle of a lesson. When he reminded her again, she told him "bite me"...and he ended up writing a detention referral for her. It only got worse when they started interrupting him with their instruments, playing the wrong notes and keys on purpose, and the tuba players pretending to fart by constantly blowing their instruments. That was when he yelled at them to put their instruments up and made them write a 500-word essay on Mozart for the rest of class.

After a bad day at work coupled with the nicotine, caffeine, and alcohol withdrawal and his sister calling him in the middle of dinner, he wasn't in the mood to have sex tonight.

Now, his day just got worse when the phone rang again. "Oh, shit," he muttered as he marched over toward the phone and picked it up. "What the fuck? It's 9:00 in the evening. Hello?"

Better not be a prank call again, he thought.

"What am I going to do with Megan?" His father's voice asked on the other end.

"Nice to see you, too, Dad," Kevin remarked bitterly before answering his father's question.

"She'll turn her attitude around like you did, right?"

"Well, I just told her she needs to apply herself, and she didn't like that," Kevin exhaled heavily. "Anyway, I will say that yelling, nagging, and scolding her isn't going to motivate her. It sure didn't motivate me. Neither did comparing me to Bill and Maureen. All that did was make me feel like I was a worthless piece of shit."

"Then how do I motivate her to do better?" Frank asked. *"I mean, you're a teacher."*

"Well, you could ask her if there is something she doesn't understand about the subject," suggested Kevin. "Or ask her if something is bothering her. Most of all, you and Mom should make a plan together to help her do better. Also, even if her dreams are unrealistic, don't tell her that they're stupid."

"Also, you've been suspended 40 times? When were you ever going to tell me that?" His father's voice called out on the other end, sounding slightly enraged. *"How did I not know this?"*

"I forged your signature on every form," replied Kevin, confused as to why he was only bringing this up now. "Also, why are you getting mad at me about it right now?"

"You what? You little degenerate," muttered Frank, who was surprisingly laughing softly.

"That was 15 years ago! What are you going to do about it? Punish me? I'm a grown man with a wife and a job!" Kevin snapped. "Also, calling me a degenerate didn't help either."

"Whoa, I was joking, son," Frank was shocked at his older son's tone of voice. *"Still, I'm not happy about that. I'm a little disappointed in you."*

"I'm sorry, Dad," sighed Kevin. "It's been a rough day."

"Hey, it's okay," said Frank, trying to lighten the mood. *"So, have you and Alice had any luck with the stork yet?"*

"No," Kevin shook his head before restating his advice. "Anyway, try what I suggested with Megan tomorrow or over the weekend."

Chapter End Notes

So, yes. Jimmy Fitzsimmons became a televangelist. Like Kevin, Megan has her own catchphrase insult, "barf bag". Also, I hope you all enjoyed the callback to Kevin writing chapters based on who is a dildo on his first day of summer school by having Megan start a group of back-to-back journal entries with "Dear Journal, _____ is a barf bag."

M is For Marriage Counseling

Chapter Summary

Kevin and Alice's struggle to conceive puts a strain on their marriage.

Chapter Notes

Before you read, you may have noticed in the first chapter that I changed the names of Bill's older son, Bill's daughter, and Maureen's older daughter. I did that because after I did some thinking, those names together sounded too much like I picked them too high off the popular names list of the 90s (Emily and Samantha seemed way too obvious choices in hindsight), so I went a little further down the list of the top girl names of 1995 and 1999 and chose popular names that weren't in the top 10.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

July 25, 1989
Staten Island, NY
Dr. Weinberg's Office

Kevin and Alice had been endeavoring for four years to conceive a child - no cigarettes, cutting back on alcohol, loose-fitting underwear, and anything Kevin tried to increase his sperm count - and still...nothing happened. With all of those tasks and scheduled sex sessions, their sex life was becoming less pleasurable and felt more like a daily chore.

At this point, the whole issue was putting a strain on their marriage. That became clear when they had a huge fight two weeks ago, which was the main reason and biggest motivator for why they were having a one-on-one and couples counseling session with one of Alice's father's old friends, Dr. Abraham Weinberg.

"Look, Kevin, maybe we should consider IVF," contemplated Alice incredulously as she and her husband sat down to have dinner for tonight.

"Honey," sighed Kevin with a sense of aggravation as this was the fifth time she brought this up, dropping his fork onto the plate and letting it clank. He folded his hands together and buried his face in them. "That's going to cost a fortune! You saw how much it would cost us, and our insurance doesn't cover it! I don't think we can afford it on two teachers' salaries, and it will be hard with our schedules! Even with me giving guitar lessons part-time and with both of us teaching summer school, I don't think we can afford it."

As much as Kevin thought IVF was a cool modern miracle like vaccines and birth control pills, not only was it pretty costly, but it was also something that seemed way too good to be true. Also, even with IVF, the chances of it resulting in a pregnancy were still 50/50.

"Well, I don't think it would hurt to at least try! It would be worth it if it was successful," Alice vouched desperately as she set her fork down. "We've been trying for four years and still don't have a baby!"

"And what if it doesn't result in a baby?" Kevin spat, trying hard not to raise his voice as he could sense that he was starting to. "Would it still be worth the cost? The doctor said there was only a 25% chance of a success rate!"

"Well, I'd rather try and fail than not even try at all!" Alice defended tearfully. "We can't give up hope yet! Do you really think we have a chance at conceiving naturally with a low sperm count...or even when we're over 35 or 40?"

"Have you ever considered that maybe it wasn't meant to be?" Kevin bellowed, hating to admit his internal thought that a baby for them, something they both desperately wanted, was probably never going to happen.

"How could you say that Kevin?" Alice snapped, angrily slamming a fist on the table. "I thought you wanted a baby!"

"Then maybe you should have married a man whose fucking balls work!" Kevin yelled, promptly springing out of his chair and allowing the chair's legs to noisily slide against the floor . "Of course, I want a baby! Do you think I chose to have a low sperm count? I've done so much shit to increase my sperm count and it has been fucking torture! Maybe we should give up instead of all this 'be patient and it'll happen and the same old yit-dit-dit-dit-dit-dit!"

Kevin aggressively jabbed the side of his temple as he repeated the same onomatopoeia.

"Don't you yit-dit-dit-dit-dit me, you asshole!" Alice, standing up from her chair, screamed as she also aggressively jabbed the side of her temple with all five fingers on her hand.

As soon as Kevin heard himself and Alice, they both stopped their argument, allowing their facial muscles to relax a little and bend out of their angry facial expressions. Kevin's eyes widened with shame as he realized they were sounding exactly like his parents whenever they would fight at their worst.

Neither of them said a word to each other. Instead, Kevin disappeared into their bedroom.

Dr. Weinberg, a balding man in his 60s, spoke to the couple as they sat across from his desk. After trying role-play with Kevin and Alice, he asked each of them different questions regarding their feelings as he probed deeper into their internal thoughts so he could give the right advice.

"So, Kevin," Dr. Weinberg began after Alice vented about how she believed Kevin wasn't willing to take risks. "Why do you not want to try IVF?"

"Well, I've already told her before," Kevin sighed before turning his head toward Alice. "Do you know how much it is going to cost to freeze so many of my sperm samples to increase the chance of you getting pregnant? And there is only a 25% chance that it will result in a pregnancy! If it doesn't work, then it is not worth it!"

"Kevin, it's just one attempt," Alice exhaled deeply, rubbing her forehead with exasperation. "Why are you so afraid to take risks now?"

"Alice, maybe your husband is afraid of going into debt and the procedure not working. Or maybe, he could have thoughts he doesn't want to share," Dr. Weinberg theorized as he examined Kevin and Alice's comments. "Kevin, do you secretly not want children and you're hoping it doesn't work?"

"What? No! I really want a child!" Kevin snapped defensively, letting tears fall from his face as he admitted his feelings to Alice. "It's just that...now that you and I have been putting so much energy into trying for a baby, our sex life isn't fun anymore and we haven't been intimate anymore. I just miss the old us, and I hate feeling like a failure every time you get a negative pregnancy test! If IVF doesn't work for us, and if you want to try another round, it's going to drain our bank account and we probably won't have any money for our child's college fund! These past two years have been emotional torture!"

Alice's eyes widened as she listened to her husband's confession. She had to admit that he was right that she did miss the way they used to be. Also, this whole trying-to-conceive thing has been exhausting in many ways and she hated to admit it, but she couldn't stand wasting so many years on a dream that might never come.

"Kevin, I had no idea you felt that way," Alice sniffed as she reached out for her husband's hand. "I'm sorry. Honestly, I miss the old us, too."

"I think we just got to the bottom line," Dr. Weinberg proposed, finally coming up with a possible "solution" to the couple's problems. "I don't have any advice for you fertility wise, but I think the big picture here is that it's best if you both focus on each other for a while. I'm not telling you to stop having a baby or keep trying, but I do think you might need to take a break from it and start to accept the possibility of being childless. Right now, you should both be grateful that you at least have each other."

Chapter End Notes

The reason why I made Kevin hesitant about IVF was because in the current setting of the chapter, it was still pretty much a new thing and Kevin didn't hear a lot of IVF success stories and there were no blogs or forums for him to search for answers in 1989.

Also, a slight spoiler, although six grandchildren made an appearance in the first chapter, Frank and Sue will actually have a total of eight grandchildren. Anyway, I know I'm getting a little ahead of myself (and slight spoilers ahead), but here is the complete

timeline of the births of all of Frank and Sue's grandchildren in case some of you all are curious:

November 27, 1992 - Natalie Goldman-Murphy (via Kevin and Alice)
February 11, 1994 - Garrett Murphy (via Bill and Nia)
September 29, 1995 - Alyssa Ichikawa (via Maureen and Scott)
June 16, 1996 - Zachary "Zach" Murphy (via Bill and Nia)
April 14, 1998 - Madeline "Maddie" Ichikawa (via Maureen and Scott)
January 7, 1999 - Brooke Murphy (via Bill and Nia)
May 10, 2000 - Samuel "Sam" Goldman-Murphy (via Kevin and Alice)
December 28, 2009 - Francis "Frankie" Murphy-Garcia (via Megan and Shannon, a future OC)

Please review :)

Q is For Quarter-Life Crisis

Chapter Summary

The Murphy siblings have a pity party together on the front porch.

November 23, 1989
Rustvale, PA
The Murphy House

It was 1:00 am when Bill sat on the front porch of his childhood home, smoking a cigarette and drinking a six-pack of White House beer. He couldn't shake the feeling that his life was going nowhere - a harsh reminder he received yet again this Thanksgiving.

Out of all his siblings (minus Megan, who was only a freshman in high school), Bill felt like the biggest failure and disappointment when he compared himself to them.

Maureen was living her best life in California. She was pursuing a PhD at a prestigious college and was in a great relationship; Bill and the rest of his family geniuinely liked Scott and hoped he would be "the one." Meanwhile, Kevin was happily married and living in New York, where he had a fulfilling job. In comparison to Bill's life, their lives seemed perfect.

Bill had a college degree like Kevin and Maureen, but he worked as a failed entrepreneur with a poor bookkeeping job at a bill collection firm and had many unsuccessful relationships.

Just when he and Brenda Sullivan were getting serious, she decided to leave him for another man. He broke things off with Jill Davis when he realized the horrible kind of person she really was. He dated Bridget Fitzsimmons for a year and a half until he realized he couldn't handle being a stepfather to her nine-year-old son, who was quite difficult to manage, nor could he cope with her volatile baby daddy. He thought Pam Esposito would be the one until she dumped him just when he was about to propose.

He loved Kim Anderson, and theirs was the best romantic relationship he had ever experienced since high school. However, they mutually decided to break up in the summer of 1983 when she moved far away for a job opportunity. Sometimes, he wished he had dropped out of college or at least transferred so he could be with her.

His thoughts were interrupted when he heard the door open, revealing Kevin in a red bath robe, plaid blue pajama bottoms, and a black Shire of Frodo concert t-shirt. "Hey."

"Hey, Kevin," sighed Bill, scooting over toward the side to make room for his brother, appreciating the company. "Beer?" He offered, holding an unopened can out for him.

"Yes," murmured Kevin as he retrieved the can from Bill's hand once he sat down. "Can I have a cigarette?"

"Sure," faltered Bill dubiously, pulling one from his pack and handing it to Kevin. "But I thought you quit smoking? You know, to increase your..."

"Shut up, dildo," demanded Kevin, half-joking with a slight smile as Bill chuckled in response. "I just need one right now. Also, our marriage therapist said that it might be good for Alice and I to take a break from that for a while."

The door then opened again, this time revealing it to be Maureen in a light blue winter coat over her pajamas, her hammer claw bangs completely unkempt along with the rest of her hair, which she now often wore in voluminous curls.

"Move over, I want some, too," she commanded as she accepted a cigarette and a can of beer from Bill.

The three elder Murphy siblings were quiet as they sipped from their cans and puffed their cigarettes, examining all the houses on the cul-de-sac of Slagtree Court, reminiscing all the memories they had of the neighbors who still occupied the same houses. Nothing had changed these past 15 years, except for perhaps a few minor things.

The late Chet Stevenson's house, now infamously referred to as the murder house, remained empty and unoccupied. The "For Sale" sign from the now discontinued White Flight Realty was still pitched in the un-mowed and overgrown yard. To their knowledge, poor Nguyen-Nguyen was still serving life in prison. The neighborhood kids, most of whom were not born yet when the incident happened, believed the house was haunted by Chet's ghost.

Dear and sweet old Otto Holtenwasser still lived in the same house, but as he was pushing 80, he began to experience the onset of dementia, requiring assistance from neighbors and members of the synagogue. Since they now completely understood his past, Kevin, Bill, and Maureen couldn't help but feel foolish to ever think that he was a Nazi or even a Satan worshipper. They hadn't seen him much since Kevin and Alice's wedding. He was a family friend of both the Murphys and the Goldmans.

The Goomers were still around, and the whole neighborhood kind of pretended that they didn't hear them blurt out their real names during the Christmas party 15 years ago. Goomer still continued his unsettling behavior of spying on the neighbors, breaking into their houses, impersonating them, and shitting in the woods. Evelyn, on the other hand, was just a neighborhood busybody, always involved in everyone's affairs and a bit too clingy with other people's babies.

According to Megan, Vic Reynolds always threw the most lavish birthday parties for his three children. He had been married to this wonderful woman named Beverly (whom he met at the radio station) since 1977, and she was a loving stepmother to Vic Jr. (well, she was always "Mom" to Vic Jr.) and an amazing mother to the two children they had together, eleven-year-old Chad and nine-year-old Tiffany. Vic Jr. was now a freshman in high school.

Ginny Deichpfister moved back in with Greg Throater after her relationship with Aunt Eileen didn't work out. The two of them co-parented their sons while dating other people until Greg passed away from AIDS in 1984. Although they were uncertain about Connor's whereabouts, they knew Greg Jr. had joined an evangelical cult-like church in Nebraska.

The only residents remaining in the Bonfiglio house were Babe and Nana Rose. Marie and Babe divorced in 1987 after Anthony went off to college, which was why Marie no longer lived there...yet she still lived somewhere in te neighborhood. Phillip and Anthony didn't live there anymore either since they moved out and settled in different cities across Pennsylvania, living their own lives.

"My life sucks!" Bill vented as he chugged down his third can of beer, starting a pity party. "Dad was right. Work doesn't bring you happiness! All it does is pay my fucking bills! This stupid job doesn't even pay me well! I fucking hate my job and I can't keep a fucking relationship, so I'm probably going to die alone! You two, your lives are so perfect!"

"You think my life is perfect?" Kevin scoffed, inhaling the smoke from his cigarette before blowing the smoke in the air. "Alice and I have been trying to have a baby for nearly five years and we still don't have one. We've been going to marriage counseling because it almost wrecked our marriage. We can afford therapy, but we can't afford IVF. We'll probably have to accept being childless."

"I'm sorry if I'm rubbing my happiness in your face," grumbled Maureen sarcastically as she rolled her eyes, setting her beer can down after finishing the last drop. "My life isn't perfect either. I'm the only woman at my job and my boss is the fucking worst. He asked me if I knew how to use a computer. Of course, I know, this is a software company. If I didn't, then why the hell did you hire me in the first place? Did you just want an employee with boobs, you misogynist asshole?"

"I have no idea what that word means, but I'm going to guess the answer is yes," stated Bill, feeling a little buzzed.

"It means he hates women, dildo," answered Kevin, chuckling softly. "But at least Maureen doesn't have to watch any of Jimmy Fitzsimmons' stupid religion commercials."

"I still can't believe he was able to become a priest at our church and a televangelist when he has an illegitimate child," scoffed Maureen, as she and her brothers recalled very well when Jimmy got Denise Dabrowski pregnant in 1977. When her parents asked who the father was, they thought she was lying at first when she said it was Jimmy Fitzsimmons, thinking their daughter was giving out a fake name to protect the father's identity.

"He doesn't even acknowledge that his kid exists," gibed Bill, remembering a year ago, on his way to work, when he saw an irate Denise marching up to the church and demanding that Jimmy pay child support.

"Can't believe he got to have a kid while my balls can't even produce enough sperm," resented Kevin, taking another sip of beer.

The three older Murphy siblings continued their pity party until the front door opened once more, revealing Megan.

"Can I have some?" She requested hesitantly, which surprised her older siblings.

"Absolutely not, you're fifteen," declined Kevin pensively; sometimes tending to act like a parent toward Megan instead of a sibling.

"Seriously, didn't Dad say he would put you through a wall if you ever smoked?" Bill implied.

"Please," she cajoled with a smirk. "I can't sleep. Besides, he already knows I've been suspended for smoking. Also, don't act like you haven't done this stuff at my age. Not to mention, stupider stuff."

Kevin, Bill, and Maureen rolled their eyes, always hating it whenever their teenage sister reminded them of all the stupid things they did as teenagers - cutting class, sneaking beers, smoking cigarettes, shoplifting, stealing street signs, smoking pot, robbing a liquor store, holding seances. It was always her way of getting them to give in to letting her have a cigarette or an alcoholic beverage whenever she would visit them at their places.

"Fine," surrendered Bill, handing her a can of beer and a cigarette.

"But just one," finalized Kevin with a serious look on his face. "I'm done taking the fall for all of you."

"And don't tell Mom and Dad," added Maureen.

"I was waiting for the perfect moment to ask Brian out on a date, but then he asked Tracy out and now they're officially dating," Megan said bitterly, sharing her own problems as she and her siblings continued to drink and smoke. "Fuck Tracy. I hate that stupid bitch and I'm probably going to die alone."

Bill just scoffed at Megan's last sentence. *Typical teenage drama,* he thought with annoyance.

"Wait," Maureen raised her eyebrow as she wondered something after hearing the name. "Tracy Jenkins?"

"Yes," confirmed Megan.

"Of course," sighed Maureen with a slight laugh as she remembered Amy Jenkins. "She's just like her sister. Since you and her were babies, I always knew you would hate each other."

"Speaking of babies, you will make a great dad someday, Kevin. I know it will happen someday," Megan smiled at her brother yet also hesitated to since she was aware of what he and Alice were going through. "You deserve it. Maybe you could at least try that in-vitro thing?"

"We already talked about it," mumbled Kevin, not even bothering to explain once again. He knew she meant well, but he and Alice were tired of their families and friends asking how things were going. "Also, you're only fifteen. That's a bit early to determine that. You have your entire youth ahead of you."

"What would you know, Kevin? You married your high school sweetheart," Bill pointed out.

"Alice and I broke up three times before we got married, and I dated other women between break-ups," groaned Kevin, remembering the reason for their last break-up and how it had to do with their differences in religious backgrounds. Even though Kevin converted to Judaism, he and Alice still celebrated Christmas. Although Alice didn't pressure him or force him, Kevin insisted on converting for her. However, he mostly did it for his in-laws and also because he wasn't that serious about being Catholic.

"And if anyone is going to die alone, it's probably me," Bill mourned pitifully, his speech a bit louder since he had a whole pack of beer.

"Bill, you will find someone to call your own," reassured Maureen, patting Bill's shoulder while also discreetly moving the packs of beer away from him since he was obviously too drunk.

"I hope so," slurred Bill. "But I don't think I'll ever find a woman as good as Kim. There aren't a lot of good women in Rustvale. Also, I fucking hate the 80s! The 90s are going to suck even more for me!"

P is For Proposal (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

Scott proposes to Maureen.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

May 13, 1990
Stanford, CA
Maureen and Scott's Apartment

Maureen and Scott sat on their paisley-patterned blue and white couch as they enjoyed their VHS tape recording of the season finale episode of *Roseanne* that they missed because they needed to study for finals, eating take-out Chinese food for dinner for what was probably the fifth time this month.

Their families, who flew from the East Coast for the weekend to attend their graduation, were all finally gone and had left. Maureen dropped off her parents, Megan, and Bill at the airport while Scott drove his parents and grandmother. Kevin and Alice, on the other hand, just took a taxi to the airport since they weren't flying back to Pennsylvania like everyone else and didn't want to burden Maureen or Scott with having to make two trips to the airport.

Speaking of Maureen and Scott, they have been together for a year and a half, living together for three months, and now have held aerospace engineering PhDs for three days.

"Maureen Susan Murphy!" The Dean of Stanford University called her name over the microphone as Maureen proudly walked across the campus stadium stage and accepted her doctoral diploma.

Scott (also dressed in a graduation cap and gown and had accepted his diploma earlier), his parents, her parents, and her siblings were in the audience, cheering for her.

Even her father, who often discouraged her from all this "boy stuff", was clapping for her. Most of all, her mother, who was crying tears of pride and joy, was the one who cheered the loudest.

Maureen smiled and waved at her family and boyfriend after proudly grabbing her diploma, gratifyingly clenching it in the air with her fist. She was officially the first woman in her family to not only finish college, but also the first woman and person in her family to get a PhD.

She couldn't believe it. She was officially Dr. Maureen Murphy, PhD.

Other than the exhilaration of finally finishing her education, Maureen was also optimistic about starting a new job at a different software company at the end of the month. Not only was this job going to pay her a better salary, but her soon-to-be boss at this job seemed cool and more encouraging than the old fart misogynist she recently resigned from.

Scott, who was slightly being restrained and crushed against the couch arm from Maureen lying against him and snuggling into his side, reached for the remote that lay on the side table next to the couch and pressed the pause button.

Maureen, at first assuming he was getting up to use the bathroom, was slightly befuddled when he passionately told her he couldn't take this anymore and then left the room.

Take what anymore? She wondered.

Still sitting on the couch with the blanket over her lap, Maureen smiled nervously as Scott returned to her sight, concealing something in his hand in his pajama pocket.

"Maureen, I have something I want to ask you," Scott expressed as he kept his gaze on Maureen as he stood right in front of her and pulled his hand out of his pocket.

"Okay?" Maureen questioned, theorizing what he was going to do until she finally figured out what his plan was he slowly dropped to one knee, a slightly apprehensive look on his face.

Oh, my god! Is he proposing? She presumed as Scott fumbled in his pocket for something, her guess turning out to be true when he pulled out a small velvet black box and then opened it, revealing a gold diamond ring.

Maureen couldn't help but watch Scott with astonishment. This wasn't the first time someone proposed to her, but it all still felt surreal.

"Maureen, these past two years with you have been awesome," Scott began, presenting the ring in its box. "I also have to admit that I even enjoyed our times together in high school and even back in elementary school, even though we weren't dating. I know that night was one of the worst nights of your life, but I did enjoy playing the lead with you in the school play..."

Scott paused for a minute when he realized he was getting a little off topic. He looked away from Maureen for a minute before continuing his little speech, reaching out for her hand to take into his.

"I love you, Maureen. Since we became more than friends, I now want us to be more than boyfriend and girlfriend. I want us to be husband and wife. So, Maureen Susan Murphy, will you marry me?" Scott finished with a smile, awaiting an answer.

Maureen didn't respond. Instead, she just continued to look down at her boyfriend with a blank stare. While she did love Scott and did want to be with him in the long term, her

negative memories of her ex-fiancé were now crowding her mind and pushing aside her positive feelings about her current boyfriend.

Scott, noticing the expression on Maureen's face didn't display any joy, lowered the box and got back up from the floor. "Maureen?"

"Um, I don't know," was all Maureen could say as she sprung from the couch and turned off the TV, going straight for their bedroom. "I'm going to bed."

Chapter End Notes

I know I ended this chapter on a cliffhanger, but the next one will continue where it left off.

P is For Proposal (Part 2)

Chapter Summary

Maureen wonders if she should accept Scott's proposal.

May 14, 1990
Stanford, CA
Maureen and Scott's Apartment

Maureen hadn't spoken one word to Scott since she left him hanging over his marriage proposal the night before.

After Maureen settled into bed without giving him an answer, Scott just surrendered himself to the couch that night. They continued to give each other the cold shoulder into the morning despite eating breakfast at the same table at the same moment. They didn't even kiss each other goodbye as they went on with their separate schedules for the day.

While Scott tried to get through work on the usual dreadful Monday, Maureen continued to debate whether or not she should accept his proposal as she took care of household tasks such as the dishes and laundry and occupied herself with self-fulfilling tasks such as catching up on a book, taking a walk, seeing what was on TV, and preparing for her lunch date with Angela.

Maureen desired to say yes, but she couldn't quite figure out why she was afraid to. Half of her reckoned that it might have had to do with how things ended with Mark, but the other half kept reminding herself that Scott was nothing like her toxic ex-fiancé.

She was also well aware that, like her, her brothers' first attempts at getting engaged didn't work out. She remembered about five years ago when Bill told her he would propose to Pam right before he cried about her dumping him. Despite being married for nearly seven years, the first time Kevin proposed to Alice led to them breaking up for a while.

As for her parents, they only got married because of an accidental pregnancy.

Still, she continuously reminded herself that Kevin's second attempt at proposing to the same woman worked out and that she probably shouldn't predict her life's outcomes based on what thus far happened to her parents and brothers.

Maureen tried to enjoy her lunch with Angela (who had asked her to meet her on her lunch break) at the deli place a block from her friend's workplace. However, doing so was difficult due to her inevitable thoughts about Scott's proposal.

While Angela devoured her sandwich, all Maureen could do was take transient sips from her soda and poke her plastic spoon around in her cup of broccoli soup.

"Maureen, are you okay?" Her friend prodded worriedly, her mouth full. "You barely touched your food. Did you and Scott get into a fight?"

"I'm fine. We're fine," Maureen inhaled deeply as she slipped her fingers through the holes of the outside table. "It's just that...Scott asked me to marry him last night."

"What? Oh, my god! That's wonderful!" Angela clamored joyfully, nearly knocking over her cup of soda and even accidentally spitting some chewed-up food out of her mouth. "But why are you so glum about it, though?"

"I didn't say anything," Maureen replied stoically. "I just told him, 'I don't know,' and then went to bed. We haven't talked about it since last night."

"What? Why?" Angela was shocked that her friend would reject a proposal from such a good man. "He's a great guy, and he is loyal to you. Don't you want to spend the rest of your life with him?"

"I do. I love Scott. It's just, I-I don't know why I can't say 'yes'," stammered Maureen, who still couldn't figure out why.

"Is it because you think marriage is just a piece of paper?" Angela assumed.

"No. I do want the financial advantages of marriage," clarified Maureen.

"Okay, are you afraid of him doing what Mark did to you?" Angela speculated with a solemn sigh, which made a bit of sense to Maureen. "Because I doubt he is like that. Does your family approve of him?"

"Yes, I think," faltered Maureen, scared to admit that she was afraid of getting her heart broken again. This was also why she initially hesitated to ask him out and even move in with him.

"Then, maybe you should accept," suggested Angela. "Stop letting your trauma over Mark stop you. I think you should give this one a chance. And if things don't work out, it's no big deal. In fact, what are the odds that two engagements in your life in a row will fail."

At 4:00 pm, while Scott was still at work, Maureen dialed her parents' home phone number, hoping her mother was home to pick up as she knew she didn't host any parenting classes on Mondays.

She really needed Sue's words of wisdom at this moment.

"Maureen, you deserve to be happy," advised Sue over the phone, who had apparently answered the call along with Frank and Megan, who were also joining the conversation. *"If you want to spend the rest of your life with him, why would you say 'no'?"*

"I don't know," shrugged Maureen. "I'm just afraid of it not working out in the long-term like what happened with Mark."

"Honey, Scott is nothing like Mark. He's a good man, and he makes you happy," reassured Sue, her voice sneering at the mention of her daughter's ex-fiancé. *"I say give it a chance. Here, let me give the phone to your father. He has something he would like to tell you."*

Maureen twirled the wire around her fingers as she heard the muffled noises on the other end before finally hearing her father's stern yet playful voice.

"Say 'yes'!" Frank demanded jestingly. *"What the fuck is wrong with you, princess?"*

"Um..."

"I love the guy!" Frank continued. *"Why are you even debating?"*

After spending the rest of the afternoon debating, Maureen finally settled on a decision. When Scott came home that evening, she was sitting at the dinner table, waiting for him, and she stared at the ring in the box on the kitchen counter.

"Hey," he greeted listlessly as the couple finally exchanged words since last night.

"Hey," she exhaled, twiddling her thumbs and avoiding eye contact with him.

After less than half a minute of silence, Scott finally spoke up.

"Look, babe," he exhaled, rubbing the back of his head since he was also second-guessing himself all day, not only remembering that Maureen was once engaged, but also that it ended with the guy cheating on her (and he wasn't even a good man to begin with). "I'm sorry if my proposal was too sudden. If you don't want to get married right now or even at all, it's cool if you're not ready. I completely understand, and I won't give you an ultimatum."

For the first time since this morning, Maureen smiled back at Scott as she listened to him continue his monologue of expressing his love and commitment to her.

"And if you don't see a long-term future with me, I also understand," Scott avowed, sounding a bit defeated yet willing to accept any answer. "So, whatever you want to do - get married, not get married but still be together, or break up right now - I'll take."

Hearing Scott's words was officially enough for Maureen to finally come to a decision. Every single word he said was genuine, sweet, mature, sexy, attractive, and just enough to prove to her that he was most likely a man who respected her and also obviously could be the right guy.

"You know what," Maureen smiled as she got up from her chair and walked toward the counter to grab the ring out of the box and then slap it into his palm. "Yes! Put that ring on my finger!"

Scott's worried expression suddenly turned to relief and happiness once his girlfriend enthusiastically gave him the box and then eagerly held out her left hand for him to slide the ring onto her finger.

The two of them leaned in to kiss each other passionately, excited for the crucial milestone in their relationship.

H is For High School Reunion

Chapter Summary

Bill crosses paths with Rosie's daughter.

May 19, 1990
Rustvale, PA
The Pronghorn Lodge

"Two White House beers, please," a dissatisfied, disconsolate, and depressed Bill ordered from the bartender woefully as he sat at the bar of the Pronghorn Lodge after departing from his high school reunion early, not even acknowledging the woman sitting on one stool next to him.

He thought attending the ten-year high school reunion for the Huey Long Class of 1980 would be a lot of fun, reconnecting with old friends and receiving a sweet nibble of adolescent nostalgia. Boy, he turned out to be wrong because it was another gentle reminder of how much he fucking hated his miserable fucking life in his hometown.

First, running into a couple of married and/or engaged ex-girlfriends felt like a slap in the face. Second, hearing everyone's success stories compared to the few things he had done with his life made him feel like a failure again. Everyone was either in a relationship, engaged, married, pregnant, had kids, had fulfilling jobs, or some or all of the above. Even Phillip Bonfiglio was living his best life since he was engaged to his girlfriend of six years and working as a security guard.

The only thing Bill had to offer was his reputation as the Rustvale Rat, something he wasn't proud of in hindsight.

On the plus side, hearing the notorious incident of Kevin Murphy and Alice Goldman fucking in the bathroom stall at the reunion for the Class of 1977 and getting caught by the retired Principal Morgan to be a legend was super entertaining.

Of course, Bill was already well aware of that event. Kevin is his brother, and he told him that story. However, he knew Kevin and Alice only did it because they were trying to conceive a baby...and they were still having no luck with that.

"Here's to another lousy decade," sulked Bill as he opened the can of beer and started chugging, not looking forward to the inevitable truth that in two years, he would be 30, single, and stuck in Rustvale.

"Sucky life?" A feminine voice coming from his left ear startled Bill.

He then turned his body 45 degrees toward the source and realized that the woman next to him, who was chugging on a different brand of beer can, had sparked a conversation with him.

"Yeah," sighed Bill, nodding in response to her comment while looking down at the linoleum floor. "Work doesn't bring me happiness, and I have nothing to come home to except for TV. Going to my high school reunion didn't make me feel any better. All it did was make me hate my life even more."

"Which school?" The woman queried with inquisitiveness.

"Huey Long High. Class of 1980," answered Bill. "What about you?"

"Medgar Evers, Class of '81. But I don't think I'll be able to go to mine," the woman confirmed, pausing for a few minutes before asking him another question. "What's your name?"

"Bill. Bill Murphy," replied Bill.

"Nia Roosevelt," the woman added. Bill thought he might be overthinking things, but this woman was starting to seem more familiar to him. "Did you travel back to your hometown for your reunion?"

"Nah, I've been living in this shithole for the past six years working at a bill collection firm," grumbled Bill, crushing his empty can of beer. "My life sucks, and it's going nowhere. You?"

"I'm just visiting my parents," Nia answered. "I live in Pittsburgh. I just finished my last year of med school. I'll be heading to Chicago to start my pediatric residency next month."

"You're a doctor? That's cool!" Bill finally managed to crack a smile since he left the reunion. "So, pediatrician...that's a doctor for kids, right?"

"Yep," nodded Nia. "But still, barely. My dad was also a city alderman in the '70s. Chauncey Roosevelt."

Suddenly, it then hit Bill. He knew this woman looked and sounded familiar; she was the daughter of Rosie, one of his father's former colleagues at Alahican Airways. The last time they crossed paths was in 1979 when they accompanied their fathers at Bob Pogo's funeral, both Frank and Rosie being somewhat joyful about that guy dying for some reason. Neither Bill nor Nia spoke to each other at that time.

However, that wasn't the first time Bill and Nia crossed paths. To both of them, they looked completely different and unrecognizable, given Bill's mullet and facial stubbles and Nia's curly hair that was no longer in afro puffs.

"Didn't your dad work at Mohican Airways with mine?" Bill questioned, raising his eyebrow as he tried to confirm his suspicion.

"Yeah, that's right. Frank Murphy's son," acknowledged Nia as she recognized the freckled redhead. "He helped my dad with his campaign for alderman."

However, Nia also suddenly realized that it was him in that police car the night her father got pulled over, which was the first time something like that ever happened to her...and it sadly wasn't the last. Despite only being eleven at the time, she could tell in the boy's eyes that he didn't like what was happening in front of him...compared to the Dahmer kid's reaction when it happened to her and her mother for the second time. When Officer Dahmer had his son in the police cruiser when he pulled her mother over, that bastard Jeffrey was smirking sinisterly the entire time.

Telepathically, Bill was realizing the same thing. As soon as he noticed Nia's smile fading, the first thing that came to his mind was that haunting, eye-opening night in December of 1974 - the night he and Nia first crossed paths and came face-to-face with each other in different cars as her father was racially profiled by the police. That wasn't the first dose of everyday police cruelty he witnessed during his time as a junior cop, but watching those two police officers interrogate Rosie (for what he said what was probably the umpteenth time) in front of his daughter was the final nail in the coffin for Bill. That was when he decided that he didn't want to be a cop and contribute to this oppressive system.

"I'm guessing you quit being a junior cop," Nia guessed, frowning as she replayed that awful memory.

"Yes, I did," validated Bill, avoiding eye contact for a brief second as the guilt from that incident bubbled up in his throat. "Seeing all those cruel things the cops did made me realize that job wasn't for me. It all seemed...wrong."

"Yeah, it is," sighed Nia before changing the subject to something slightly less upsetting, her somber expression transitioning to a look of contentment. "Also, weren't you the redhead kid that went missing and fell off the bridge into the water? It was on the news?"

"Yeah," Bill chuckled loudly, slamming his fist on the counter as he found himself surprisingly laughing at that traumatizing night. "My brother jumped in and tried to save me but then got washed away, but then my sister saved me by throwing a life preserver at me."

"I know, my dad told me the whole story," acknowledged Nia, laughing at the older Murphy boy's dumb decision. "Anyway, how is your dad?"

"He's fine, but he's still the same," sighed Bill. "How's yours?"

"He's good," replied Nia before going on a light rant about her family. "But he and my mom keep asking me if I'm ever going to settle down and give them grandbabies. I mean, Darryl just gave them one. Damn, be patient! Let me become a doctor and find a man first."

"And what are they complaining about? At least they have one. My parents don't even have any grandchildren yet," snarked Bill, throwing in a light-hearted joke, hoping he didn't fuck it up.

"You're so funny!" Nia cackled in response, admiring the man's sense of humor.

Bill and Nia continued to strike up a continuous conversation until midnight, ending with Bill giving Nia his phone number. However, he didn't know why he bothered when she lived in

Pittsburgh and was going to be leaving for Chicago soon anyway.

C is For Chicago

Chapter Summary

Bill gets a job offer in Chicago.

May 21, 1990
Rustvale, PA
O'Malley's Finances

As Bill expected, Nia didn't call him back since he gave her his home phone number at the Pronghorn Lodge. He desperately yearned to open his falling-apart phone book, look for the number of Chauncey "Rosie" Roosevelt's place, and have him or Georgia Roosevelt call his daughter's place in Pittsburgh...but he knew deep down that chasing after some woman he ran into at a bar that would be moving three states away in about a month wouldn't be worth it; which sucked because hanging out with Nia that night was the happiest Bill had ever felt when he wasn't hanging out with his parents or siblings.

Therefore, on this typically morose Monday approaching 5:00 pm, Bill was back to living his boring, pathetic life and working his shitty bookkeeping job as he sat in his office space, typing and filing data on his IBM computer.

Something juicy and interesting did happen today, though...and he couldn't wait to tell it to his parents and siblings the next time they would visit each other.

Steve, a new hire who recently finished his two days of training on Thursday and Friday, just began his first day of working here. However, it also happened to be his last. After about an hour of clocking in and settling in his cubicle, he just had the balls to get up to go to the bathroom, leave through the front door, and drive away without announcing anything. Eventually, the boss discovered that this Steve guy was hired with a fake name and erased his debt on his computer.

Still, despite that riveting event, the remainder of Bill's workday was dull, lifeless, and crappy, as usual, slowly dying metaphorically. Not even being nominated as "Employee of the Month" in April was satisfying. He didn't even consider something like that to be an accomplishment.

He paused briefly to peek at his watch, noticing that it was only 4:45, with only 15 minutes left of work. All he could do was sigh exasperatingly as he monotonously waited for the clock to chime 5:00 so he could go home and watch some TV, one of his only joys in life right now.

Once Bill pulled into Apartment 16B's reserved parking spot, he decided now was a good time to check the mailbox. So, before heading toward his apartment door, he walked over to the nearby outdoor cluster box unit.

While turning the key into the lock of Box 16B, he heard an all-too-familiar voice call out to him.

"Miss me, mullet-head rat pussy Dad!" A child's nasal voice called.

"Ah, shit," Bill muttered under his breath, aware that it was the voice of Chris Fitzsimmons, Bridget's 11-year-old psycho son who often called Bill "Dad" or "Daddy", something Bill didn't really appreciate or even wanted to be seen as right now. Feigning a smile, he turned around and waved to Bridget and Chris.

"Christopher Christopherson Fitzsimmons!" Bridget scolded, smacking the back of her son's head. "Don't you dare talk to your ex-stepfather like that!"

We were never married, psycho! Bill bitterly thought. *And I will never be your psycho kid's dad!*

"Yes, mama," the little red-headed boy replied meekly, nursing the slap he received to his head.

"Hi, Bill," Bridget greeted flirtatiously, her tune switching from angry to flirty and then back to angry. "You have no idea what you lost in me!"

"I know," fibbed Bill, ignoring Bridget as he unlocked the box and pulled out his mail, knowing he actually dodged a bullet when he broke up with Bridget...twice.

Bill chugged down a White House beer and devoured a TV dinner of Salisbury steak and mashed potatoes as he examined all the opened envelopes from his mailbox. Other than a bunch of bills, junk, and other stuff, he also noticed that his business proposal for sleeved blankets was denied.

However, the one envelope that stuck out to him was from an organization called Chance and Company Accounting from Chicago. Nervously, he opened the letter and then read the first line:

Mr. William Murphy,

We are excited to offer you an accounting position at Chance and Company Accounting, starting at $59,000 a year.

Once Bill finished reading the rest of the letter, he weighed his options. Maybe he should take the job offer? After all, it paid a bit more, and it would probably be his only ticket out of Rustvale.

In addition, although the odds were low, he might get to see Nia again since he briefly remembered her mentioning that she would be starting her pediatric residency in Chicago.

Also, even if he didn't run into her, the heavily-populated city of Chicago would possibly give him much more opportunity than the shitty small town of Rustvale ever did.

Still, he debated his final option for the rest of the night as he ate a bag of popcorn, watched TV, took a shower, and went to bed.

The following morning, before leaving for work, Bill called the company's number printed on the letter and notified them that he was happy to accept the job, with the manager telling him he could start in four weeks.

During his lunch break on Wednesday, he ate his lunch at his computer as he typed up his two-week notice and printed it out.

Then, by Friday evening, he slapped his two-week notice onto his boss's desk.

"Take this job and shove it!" Bill smirked, using his eyes to give the bird to his employer and whack him with a hockey stick and shove it up his ass.

Now, all he had to do was look for apartments in Chicago over the weekend.

S is For Sleepover

Chapter Summary

Bill and Nia become a couple.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

July 28, 1990
Chicago, IL
Nia's Apartment

Bill sat inches away from Nia on her mustard yellow couch - not even cuddling or touching her (which was practically every time) - as they enjoyed popcorn and pizza while watching a VHS rental of *Die Hard* in her studio apartment.

Since moving to Chicago and settling down and adjusting to his new job, Bill was delighted to be far away from Rustvale. He appreciated the change in scenery and the variety of foods and culture the city offered compared to the environment of the Quint Cities area, preferring the deep-dish, stuffed pizza over the Philadelphia and New York-style pizza he usually had back home. Also, unlike his hometown, Chicago had more character and even offered Bill an opportunity to attend stand-up comedy classes, which he immediately signed up for when he discovered that the local pub had "Stand-Up Saturdays".

However, besides the higher crime rates, the traffic congestion, an apartment that doesn't have a washer and dryer, and his upstairs neighbor who played his music too loud, the downside to moving here was that his new job, despite paying him more money, wasn't bringing him happiness and still bored him to death. During his first few weeks here, he still felt the same loneliness, incompleteness, and dissatisfaction while living in Rustvale. As much as he hated to admit it, he kind of missed his parents and sister now that he wasn't living near family anymore.

Auspiciously, what finally brought Bill the joy and satisfaction he was scouring for when choosing to relocate to Chicago was that he achieved the one-in-a-million chance to see Nia again when he discovered she was living in the same apartment building as him, albeit Nia was three floors above him. The two of them crossed paths once again when they encountered each other at the laundromat across the street from their apartment during Bill's third week in the city.

This time, when Bill and Nia exchanged their home phone numbers that day (this time, they did it sober), they actually succeeded in their plans to call each other back...and when they

did, they arranged to go to a Blackhawks game and then later hang out around town and go for a casual stroll along Oak Street Beach.

Since then, they've been hanging out more often, which usually involved one coming over to the other's apartment to watch TV or a movie one of them rented from the video store. Bill usually rented action movies, while Nia often rented romantic comedies.

Occasionally, they would end up spending the night at each other's places...but it never ended with them doing romantic stuff such as kissing, cuddling, having sexual intercourse, or even sleeping in the same bed or on the same couch.

"Okay, why are we watching a Christmas movie in July?" Nia scoffed in a muffled voice, her mouth full of pizza. She rolled her eyes and sneered as the exaggeratedly loud gunfire sound effects and Bruce Willis's over-the-top dialogue echoed from the TV.

Nia wasn't the biggest fan of the action genre (she even thought *Star Wars* was overrated). She often ruined certain scenes for Bill with her medical commentary and pointed out how the action hero needed to get to an ER immediately...much to his mild annoyance.

Because of that, Bill wondered how his father would react to her doing the same thing whenever he would watch his *Colt Luger* reruns. And speaking of Frank, watching action movies sometimes made Bill feel like he was a kid again, sitting in the living room while *Colt Luger* played on the TV.

"I don't know," shrugged Bill with a chortle, grabbing a handful of popcorn from the bowl. "Why would they release a Christmas movie in the summer? The production crew probably didn't think it through when they decided to make this set during Christmastime."

"And why Christmastime anyway?" Nia gibed.

"Probably because so many people love Christmas way too fucking much. After all, it looks like Christmas seems to start in late October since the mall likes to put up their decorations at that time," jested Bill, trying to use this time to practice some of the skills he learned in his stand-up comedy class. "And if we're going to start Christmas early, has anyone ever considered that Santa would probably prefer cold beer, not milk."

Nia, who often enjoyed Bill's sense of humor, cackled at his joke briefly before ruining it with her medical knowledge. "But...wouldn't Santa eventually be too drunk to fly?"

"God damn it," muttered Bill, Nia smirking victoriously.

"Why do you even like action movies anyway?" Nia criticized inquisitively as she and Bill watched John McClane get thrown, punched, and banged against a bunch of walls and floors. In Nia's medical opinion, this should have a hematoma, pelvic, and rib fractures by now. "It's just a bunch of white boy macho tough guys over-the-top fighting when we know the hero will win anyway. It's so boring."

"I don't know," shrugged Bill. "It's just...fun...I guess. But how can you sit through rom-coms? It's so frustrating to watch two people we know will end up together in the end go through a bunch of unnecessary conflict."

"Because it's heartwarming?" Nia answered, scooting herself closer toward Bill, almost at a kissing distance. "I know it's not a realistic portrayal of life, but I still enjoy them. It's nice to have something to root for."

"Well, maybe I could say the same thing about my love for action movies. But, I would still prefer a romance with realism," Bill giggled nervously as Nia held her hand out next to him on the couch cushion, to which he immediately gently placed his own on top.

Acknowledging where their hands were, the two of them exchanged smitten smiles before leaning their faces closer toward each other and scooting their torsos closer to where they merged, their foreheads touching each other firmly.

As the action scene continued to play on the TV screen, Bill closed his eyes for a minute as he planted a light kiss on Nia's forehead.

When he pulled away for a minute and looked at Nia, she didn't even flinch. Instead, the corners of her mouth curved into a bigger smile, silently allowing him to kiss her again, this time on the lips.

Accepting the invitation, Bill and Nia closed their eyes again as they merged their lips, sharing a couple kisses while cupping each other's cheeks before collapsing into the missionary position.

By the time the movie ended, the two confessed their love for each other before Nia fell asleep on top of Bill as they lay on the couch, Bill wrapping his arms around her and stroking her back.

Maybe the 90s won't be so lousy, Bill thought to himself optimistically as he stared at the ceiling, hoping that he and Nia would become something more.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. Please review :)

A is For Abortion

Chapter Summary

Megan gets an abortion.

Chapter Notes

TW: This chapter does contain brief mentions and descriptions of anti-choice harassment.

Before I begin, I'll go ahead and explain the timeline of Frank and Sue's pets since the canon series finale up until the year 2000. Major, the canon family dog, had to be put to sleep in late 1975. In 1977, they got another dog, Scout, who was able to be with them until she was put to sleep in early 1993. Colonel, the dog mentioned in the first chapter, joined the family as a puppy in late 1993 to fill the void in Sue and Frank's empty nest.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy.

October 4, 1991
Rustvale, PA
The Murphy House

Columbus Day weekend and the two days before the Saturday that would start that three-day weekend was going to be busy yet possibly hectic for the Murphy family because they would be heading to Los Angeles for Maureen and Scott's upcoming wedding on the thirteenth. Since they were both atheists, they rejected getting married in any place of worship (or anywhere) in Rustvale. Instead, they opted for the entire secular ceremony and reception at a scenic vineyard in Los Angeles, where they recently moved to.

Kevin and Alice would take a seven-hour drive to Rustvale on Thursday, spend the whole day there on Friday, and then fly with Frank, Sue, and Megan to Los Angeles on Saturday. Bill and Nia (who have been serious for a year now with things going very well) would also be flying into LA from Chicago on Saturday, which was Maureen and Scott's rehearsal dinner. Then, Kevin and Alice would fly back early on Monday morning before returning to New York via car (and they probably wouldn't get home until evening). Frank, Sue, Megan, Bill, and Nia would also fly back that day on separate flights.

However, nobody but Megan was aware of something that would probably interfere with those plans if she didn't deal with the issue right away. In fact, with the wedding next

weekend, Megan probably only had a week to resolve her situation if she wanted to keep it a secret from (mostly) everyone.

She needed to tell her parents something she didn't want to, and it needed to happen soon, yet she wasn't sure how she was going to tell them.

The almost seventeen-year-old silently pondered her options while she stared at her plate full of steak, green beans, and baked potato as she sat with her parents at the dinner table on this not-so-joyous Friday night. Scout, the aging yellow lab that has been in the family since she was two, was sleeping peacefully under the table. At the same time, Frank and Sue gazed at their youngest child with concern.

"Megan, princess, are you doing okay?" Frank questioned for the second time this week and the fourth time since she broke up with her boyfriend six weeks ago. Although Megan did take the break-up well for the next couple of weeks (she was the one who dumped Sean, after all), she suddenly had been acting peculiar for almost two weeks.

He and Sue noticed that Megan hadn't been hanging out with her friends or expressed any excitement or plans for her upcoming birthday. The teenager had also been super moody and tired, and Frank swore he heard vomiting the other morning.

Megan, glaring at her food, hesitated momentarily before finally responding to her father. "I'm fine," she fibbed, continuing to avoid eye contact with her parents.

"Honey, are you sure?" Sue asked doubtfully and concernedly, wondering if Megan really was sad about her break-up with Sean. "You can always talk to us if something is wrong. Are you still upset about Sean?"

Megan tensed up at the mention of Sean, not wanting to hear his name anymore since she was sick of her parents assuming being heartbroken over him was why she seemed off.

"Seriously, I'm fine!" Megan spat defensively, finally looking up at her parents with an agitated expression. "I was the one who ended things with him, so you can stop asking!"

Before Frank or Sue could respond to her lashing out - whether it was to react with wrath or try to empathize and get to the bottom of whatever was happening - Megan abandoned her food and marched straight toward her room.

The minute Frank and Sue went upstairs to their bedroom and settled into bed for the night, Megan picked up the phone on her nightstand and called her sister, the only person she could trust to keep her situation on the hush-hush right now.

Megan let the tears leak from her eyes as she listened to the ringing on the other end before Maureen's disembodied voice answered.

"Hello?"

"Maureen," Megan choked up and allowed herself to get a few more sobs out of her system, finally getting ready to finally confide her dreaded secret to somebody.

"Megan? What's wrong?"

"I'm pregnant," confessed Megan, wiping the tears from her eyes with her pajama sleeves.

"What?" Maureen sounded shocked. *"Are you sure?"*

"Yes, I'm seven weeks," confirmed Megan. "Sean and I did it right before I dumped him."

Maureen, having a hard time imagining her baby sister having sex, mustered up some composure to both ask her sister what she was going to do and give her advice. *"So, what are you going to do?"*

"I want to have an abortion," settled Megan. Not only did she not want to raise a baby or go through pregnancy right now, but she also didn't want to be tied down to Sean for the rest of her life or even have to compromise with him. Therefore, an abortion felt like the right choice for her right now. Unfortunately, there was a roadblock to being able to get that done. "But the people at the clinic told me they can't legally give me one without parental consent, and I don't want Mom and Dad to know. What if they won't let me have one?"

Maureen sighed as she examined her sister's dilemma, understanding why she wouldn't want Frank and Sue to know...especially Frank. If a misunderstanding over Maureen having a pregnancy scare at 18 induced a heart attack, then Megan's situation would definitely make him furious.

"You know, I'd be happy to schedule one for you here in Los Angeles for when you come visit next weekend. Scott and I have a friend who works at Planned Parenthood , and California doesn't have any parental consent laws for abortion," Maureen offered, trying to help Megan find a way to get the healthcare she needs without Frank and Sue finding out. *"I can pay for it, too."*

"I can't do that to you," sobbed Megan, not wanting to burden her sister and her soon-to-be brother-in-law with this during their wedding. "I want to get it done before the wedding."

"Well, you can either secretly have one in California with my help or risk confessing to Mom and Dad," stated Maureen firmly, shocked that Megan would reject an offer like that. *"And if you want to do the latter, you should tell them sooner rather than later. But...maybe you should just tell Mom. I would advise telling her instead of Dad."*

"Okay," muttered Megan, twirling the telephone's spiraled wire around her fingers.

"It will be okay," consoled Maureen. *"No matter how they react, I'm here for you."*

"Thank you," exhaled Megan, knowing she was going to need to face her mother's reaction when she tells her. "But, can you please keep this between you and me for now? Don't mention this to Bill and Kevin...or even Scott."

"Of course," promised Maureen.

It was 2:00 in the morning when Megan finally dared to approach her mother at the bedside, gently shaking her awake and hoping her father wouldn't wake up alongside her.

"Megan?" Sue, sitting herself upright slowly, yawned groggily once she noticed her daughter waking her up in the middle of the night. "What's wrong?"

"Mom," whispered Megan. "Can I talk to you alone, please? In my room?"

"Sweetheart," groaned Sue. "Can this wait until morning?"

"No, it can't," begged Megan. "Please. It's...it's urgent."

"Alright," Sue sighed, pulling herself out of bed and walking toward the master bathroom to grab her robe.

Once the mother and daughter were alone in Megan's room, Megan finally, yet hesitantly, confessed her secret to Sue.

"Mom, I-I...I need...I need an abortion," she admitted tearfully. "I'm pregnant, and I need an abortion, but I need your consent. I'm sorry, Mommy."

Sue's mouth dropped open when she heard Megan's words. She looked into her daughter's eyes with utter shock as she continued to tearfully justify her choice to terminate and plead for forgiveness for screwing up.

"Oh, sweetheart," Sue soothed, instantly pulling her daughter (whose shoulders were heaving) into a tight embrace, her tone both relieved and dumbfounded. "It's alright. It's going to be okay. I'm here for you, whatever your choice."

"Are you mad at me?" Megan sniffed, allowing Sue to wipe a tear away with her thumb.

"I'm a little shocked, but no. I don't think I'm even disappointed," reassured Sue, empathizing and understanding what dealing with an unintended pregnancy felt like. "It seems you've learned your lesson and accepted responsibility for your...mistake. Just...tell me where and we'll try to get an appointment as soon as we can."

"Thanks," Megan sighed as she hugged her mother tighter, feeling so much relief after getting all of it off her chest and not receiving an adverse reaction from her...yet still aware that her father would freak the fuck out. "Are you going to tell Dad?"

"Not right now," sighed Sue, pondering whether or not telling Frank would be a bright idea for both his and Megan's sake. "But for now, let's not. However, we're still going to have to talk about this after the abortion."

Five Days Later...

Megan sat wordlessly between Kevin and Alice in the waiting room of Planned Parenthood in Ryetown, desperately wanting to get this whole thing over with and move on with her life.

Despite the discrete bump in the road, things still went according to plan throughout the week. Kevin and Alice had arrived in Rustvale the day before, and just as promised, Sue scheduled an appointment for Megan at on the 7th. She was able to help Megan get the parental consent barrier struck down and book a slot for the procedure on the 11th...but that didn't come without Megan getting mandatory counseling and suffering through a 24-hour waiting period.

However, Sue wasn't the person Megan wanted to drive her to her abortion that day. Instead, she shyly approached Kevin and asked him to take her (while also accidentally confessing within Alice's earshot, which led to her tagging along), and he agreed to do it while also keeping it a secret from Frank.

As usual, there were more than a dozen anti-abortion hecklers outside the clinic, holding picket signs and bullhorns while harassing employees and patients (thankfully, there was no sign of any of the Jenkins today).

On their way inside, Kevin and Alice had to physically hold onto Megan and keep her right between them as they walked her toward the door and shoved away protestors. Despite Alice's usual ability to handle things calmly and rationally, she flipped a female protestor off and then yelled at her to shut the fuck up when she told them they would burn in Hell. Although Kevin had developed much better anger management skills than Frank over the years, he told a male protestor (who physically tried to yank Megan away from the protective grip of her brother and sister-in-law in order to coerce her with fear-based tactics) that if he ever touched his sister again, he would shove his hands far down his throat, pull out his intestines, strangle him with them, and then put him through a fucking wall, saying that as he aggressively grabbing him by his shirt collar.

"Megan Murphy?" A nurse called, gesturing for Megan to come to the back.

"Do you want us to come with you?" Alice offered, both she and Kevin having regained their cool after defending her from the protestors outside.

"No," Megan shook her head as she stood up from her seat and followed the nurse.

Fortunately, the procedure went smoothly, and Megan was able to be discharged after the nurse handed her a prescription and aftercare instructions.

This time, they were told to exit out the back door, thankfully being able to avoid the hecklers at the front on their way to the car.

"Thanks for taking me, Kevin," acknowledged Megan with a smile as Alice helped her into the car.

"You're welcome," replied Kevin, Alice smiling back at Megan.

For the rest of the day as they all prepared to get ready to travel for Maureen's wedding, everything went according to plan.

F is For Father of the Bride

Chapter Summary

Maureen and Scott get married.

Chapter Notes

Sorry, it's been a while. It took me two weeks to finish this chapter because the last two weekends have been busy for me. Anyway, I hope you all enjoy.

UPDATE: I noticed a continuity error on the date and location I set for this chapter, so I fixed it. Sorry about that.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

October 13, 1991
Los Angeles, CA
Sierra de Mariposas Vineyard

In a fancy, roomy bedroom inside a rustic American Craftsmen stone house, Maureen, who wasn't accustomed to dressing that fancy and getting done up, gazed at her reflection in the vanity mirror. She allowed her mother to brush and comb whatever she could with her new pixie cut while Angela, her maid of honor, applied her makeup. Meanwhile, Megan and Michelle, another friend of Maureen's, were in the room as well, putting on their finishing touches of makeup and smoothing out any visible wrinkles on their bridesmaid dresses.

Instead of a traditional church wedding, Maureen and Scott's secular ceremony and reception were being held in a Los Angeles vineyard that housed a Bed and Breakfast, functioned as a butterfly sanctuary, and often hosted outdoor theater productions. The owners have recently received more requests from couples to host wedding receptions there for the past year. In addition, while they decided to have any future children take Scott's last name, Maureen decided to keep her own.

Maureen wore a long-sleeved, silk-beaded dress that reached her ankles, leaving her collarbone and shoulders completely exposed. While the dress was white, she added some unconventional touches to her attire. For instance, she decided to forgo a veil and insisted she walk down the aisle and dance in sneakers instead of heels or formal flats.

"Oh sweetheart, you're so beautiful," Sue exclaimed as she fastened a silver diamond pendant necklace around her daughter's neck before Angela handed Maureen her glasses back.

"You said that five minutes ago, Mom," Maureen groaned lively at her tearful mother. Angela yanked a tissue out from the box and handed it to Sue.

"Oh, Maureen!" Megan teased from the other side of the room. "Let Mom cry. To be honest, you're kind of unrecognizable in makeup. For a second, I thought you were actually a Demi Moore impersonator."

Maureen rolled her eyes at her sister's slight affront, Angela and Michelle laughing softly. However, despite the teasing, she was grateful Megan seemed to be doing okay emotionally after having an abortion a few days ago, as well as that tearful phone call last week.

The clangor of the room's door opening interrupted the chatter, revealing Frank in a tuxedo, covering his eyes with one hand and holding a small ornate box with the other. "Hey ladies, is it okay if I come in?"

"Daddy, why are you covering your eyes?" Maureen grumbled jestingly, rolling her eyes. "You're not the one who is forbidden from seeing me before the wedding."

"I'm sorry, princess," chortled Frank as he uncovered his eyes, secreting tears once he got a view of his older daughter in her wedding dress, all gussied up and looking like a princess. "It's just hard to believe that this is happening. Oh, look at you! What happened to my precious baby girl?"

Megan loudly cleared her throat, raising an eyebrow at Frank as he pulled Maureen into a tight embrace, careful not to smudge her freshly done makeup.

"My *firstborn* baby girl," sighed Frank, feeling exhausted by the trivial feud between his daughters. Even as a teenager and a grown adult , they were still competing for their status as *the* princess. Neither of them wanted to be co-princesses...or Marty Allen. "Anyway, your Grandma Nora wanted me to give this to you."

With that, Frank opened the box, which presented a tiny silver hair comb adorned with sapphires, intricately designed to resemble a flowering vine.

"It's a family heirloom," explained Frank with a glimmer in his eye. "She was going to give it to your Aunt Eileen as her something old at her wedding, but since she never got married or had any children to pass it along to, she told me to give it to you instead. Maybe you can pass it on to your own kid someday."

"Of course, she gets the Murphy family heirloom," Megan huffed, rolling her eyes and looking slightly miffed. “Also, her hair might be too short for it.”

"Oh, princess. Maureen's getting married first, so she gets the comb," scoffed Frank before reminding Megan that she'll be getting a different heirloom - the one that Sue wore to their wedding. "Anyway, you'll get Grandma Marilyn's ruby necklace when you get married. And since Maureen doesn't have a veil, she needs something for her hair."

"Perhaps we can put the comb on the side. I think your hair is thick enough," suggested Sue, running her fingers through Maureen's hair, looking for spots with strands strong and thick

enough to secure the comb and a bobby pin.

"It's beautiful," Maureen admired the shiny silver, antique comb. "Thanks, Dad."

Frank handed the comb over to Sue, who gently sank the teeth of the comb into Maureen's hair just above her ear, allowing the decorative part to visibly show itself like a barrette.

Every wedding party member eventually went down the aisle and to the altar, but inside the house, it was just Maureen and Frank. Outside, friends and family gathered in the picturesque field, eagerly awaiting the moment when the bride would appear.

Frank glanced at his daughter, his heart swelling with emotion. He hesitated, fighting back tears as he took in Maureen's radiant beauty.

"Maureen," he began, his voice trembling.

"Yes?" She turned to him.

"You look beautiful," he managed to say.

"Thanks, Daddy," Maureen gushed, her voice thick with emotion as tears welled in her eyes. Removing her glasses, she allowed her father to gently wipe them from her eyes.

"So, are you ready?" Frank asked, a mix of excitement and nerves in his voice as he extended his elbow out for Maureen, signaling it was time to go down the aisle.

"Yes," replied Maureen, intertwining her arm with his, just as the string quartet began to play Wagner's classic bridal chorus.

The two of them left the house and then made their way toward the aisle, where their presence was visible to the eyes of every guest at the wedding.

Once the strings started to play, Frank and Maureen walked in military steps down the aisle, hand in hand; Maureen tightly grasping onto her father’s arm the whole time.

Scott, who opted not to wear a tie with the tux he rented (as well as the rest of the groomsmen) was already at the altar, anxiously waiting for Maureen from afar, with the rest of the wedding party. The groomsmen consisted of Kevin (a bit hungover from the bachelor party last night), Bill, and a couple of Scott’s friends; his college roommate was his Best Man. Angela and the rest of the bridesmaids (consisting of Michelle, Megan, Alice, and Scott’s sister Lori) wore matching shoulder-drop red dresses that exposed their shoulders and had a lacy, doily collarbone line. Sue (who was sitting next to Nia, Bill’s plus one, in the front row) and Scott’s parents were wiping tears from their eyes.

Once the father and daughter made it to the altar, Frank, who had a stray tear in his eye, planted a gentle kiss to Maureen’s cheek. With a warm smile, he took her hand and placed it into Scott's before he took his sat next to Sue and Nia.

“Friends, family, and witnesses, we are gathered here today to witness the marriage between Maureen Susan Murphy and Scott Hosato Ichikawa,” the officiant, the vineyard’s owner, began after he told everyone to be seated. “Maureen and Scott have written their own vows.”

Frank and Sue watched with tears in their eyes as Maureen and Scott recited their vows from small pieces of paper. Maureen even included forgiveness for Scott, remembering how he had cheated off her in third grade and then blamed it on her. Finally, they reached the "I dos".

"Scott, do you take Maureen to be your lawfully wedded wife?" The officiant looked toward Scott.

"I do," Scott declared, eagerly smiling at Maureen as he slowly placed the ring over her finger.

"Maureen, do you take Scott to be your lawfully wedded husband?" The officiant then turned to face Maureen, who was beaming.

"Hell yeah, I do," Maureen responded, earning a chorus of laughs from the guests as she quickly slid the ring onto Scott's finger.

"I now pronounce you husband and wife," declared the officiant before Scott and Maureen exchanged a passionate kiss, everyone clapping and cheering for the newlywed couple.

Chapter End Notes

You may have noticed that I changed Maureen's hair three times, it's because I decided to base her hairstyles off the kind my mom had during the late 80s and early 90s (big hair in the late 80s before cutting it short in the early 90s). Although Maureen did have stereotypical 80s hair in the late 80s, in the 90s, she has a pixie cut that is similar to Demi Moore's from "Ghost" (which later becomes a bixie cut by the mid 90s and then later a simple bob by 1999).

I'll also give my two cents on hair of the Murphys and their spouses in the 90s since you're all probably wondering. Bill has a mullet and Kevin has the stereotypical 80s and 90s long hair. Like Maureen, Alice also cut her hair short in the 90s, except Alice's is more like the hairstyle Annabella Sciorra had in "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle". Nia's is similar to what Queen Latifah had in the U.N.I.T.Y. music vide. Megan did have mild 80s-like curly hair in the early 90s before getting the Rachel Green hair by the mid 90s. Scott's hair is almost similar to what Keanu Reeves had in the 90s. Frank and Sue, however, haven't really changed their hair at all (besides getting gray hair and Frank balding a little more).

E is For Engaged

Chapter Summary

Bill and Nia get engaged.

Chapter Notes

Before you read this chapter, you might want to read Chapters 3 and 4 (the rest of the oneshots after that moved up two chapters, making "H is For Heart Attack" now Chapter 5), which were added in when I suddenly thought of oneshots that I wish I included (and I wanted to put each chapter after the first chapter to be linear and in the correct order of time). Chapter 3 handles the Murphys dealing with Major's death in 1975 and Chapter 4 is about Kevin proposing to Alice.

TW: There is a brief mention of babies and drug abuse, child abuse, infant abuse, infant death, and child death.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

March 27, 1992
Chicago, IL
Bill and Nia's Apartment

"So, how was your day?" Nia asked Bill as they chilled at the kitchen table in their West Side apartment, devouring their weekly dinner of what they referred to as "Friday Night Pizza".

"It was alright," grumbled Bill with the usual monotonous response before fulminating a diatribe about his tattletale co-worker, almost sounding just like his father whenever he groused about Bob Pogo. "Except I had it with Rick and his ego! That arrogant bastard will do anything to make the boss favor him more! He told Gary that I shouldn't leave my desk a mess, and then Gary reprimanded me for it! You don't know how much I want to strangle Dicky Rick."

"I'm sorry to hear that," sighed Nia before sharing her anecdote of a formidable day, shedding a small tear. "I lost a patient today. A six-month-old with a subdural hematoma."

"Oh, god," shook Bill, reaching out to rub his girlfriend's hand; one of the many ways he provided her consolation whenever she had a demanding day at work, whether it was due to an unbearable colleague or supervisor or a because of something that happened to a patient. Although he found his job frustrating at times, at least his work didn't involve having to deal

with disturbing, while at some times heartbreaking, situations such as abused children, giving statements in order to cover herself and avoid a lawsuit, or risk making a mistake that could lead to someone dying. Working her second year as a pediatric resident at the hospital, she has seen many heart-wrenching situations involving children and minors in the ER, PICU, NICU, and maternity ward. That was the most difficult part of her job. "What is a subdural hematoma?"

"It's a collection of blood in between two layers of the brain," clarified Nia somberly, something she often had to do whenever she mentioned medical jargon to her boyfriend. "When I saw him earlier, there was evidence of shaken baby syndrome, so I reported it to Dr. Kutcher. Six hours later, the baby was back."

"I'm sorry, babe," Bill suspired, continuing to comfort Nia for a few additional minutes, allowing her to vent all her frustrations over every kind of saddening situation she has witnessed - abused, malnourished, and neglected children, extremely premature babies who never made it out of the NICU, babies born addicted to drugs, or innocent children just cursed with bad luck.

After an hour, once the couple was lounging on the couch and channel surfing, Nia felt better, allowing her mind to forget about her patient and shift toward the daunting task she had been preparing to ask Bill for the past week...and she wanted to get it over with before she would ultimately put it off for far too long.

"Bill," she spoke up, pulling her eyes away from the TV and aiming them at Bill, whose eyes were still glued to what happened to be a rerun of *Family Matters* . "There is something I want to ask you."

"What is it?" Bill asked, still not tearing his eyes away from the TV as Nia grabbed the remote and shut it off.

"Hey!" Bill groaned playfully.

"Come on," Nia sportively punched his shoulder before wrapping her arms around him and lying against him, running her fingers through his mullet. "We've both already watched that episode. Also, it's kind of important."

"Okay," muttered Bill, hoping she wasn't telling him their relationship wouldn't work as he used his free arm to clasp her arm that was lanked across his chest like a seatbelt. Regardless, he was optimistic that wasn't the case since she compactedly embraced him like a teddy bear. "So, what is it?"

"Well, I know I'm not the one supposed to ask, but..." Nia hesitated as she fumbled with her words, gently letting go of him before affectionately grasping his hands into hers and finally spitting out what she was trying to say. "William Xavier Murphy, I want to marry you!"

Bill was amazed and awestruck, not just by the fact that a woman proposed to him but also by the fact that their desire to tie the knot was mutual. However, the birthday surprise he arranged for her next week (a gift he thought of yesterday) was now spoiled.

Bill detested having to spend his lunch break in the nearby crowded mall on a Thursday, but now that he and was in a happy, committed relationship where things mainly had been going well, things like Valentine's Day, anniversaries, and birthdays were events he actually made plans for.

Nia's 29th birthday was next week, and Bill searched aimlessly for a worthy and presentable gift. He wasn't sure about giving her earrings, a necklace, or a watch since he gifted those to her last year for her birthday and their first anniversary, and he thought that would get a bit too repetitive year after year. He was set on getting her Toni Morrison's newest book since he knew she loved her books...until she went to the bookstore and purchased it herself.

Now, Bill was utterly lost on what to get her.

Compared to the rest of his girlfriends (even Kim), Nia was the best romantic relationship he ever had. After being together for almost two years, being serious for a year and a half, and living together for a year, Bill hoped his relationship with Nia would last evermore.

While eyeing all the shiny rings of different gems displayed in the glass cases, Bill pondered if a ring would make a good birthday present. However, he pondered whether this ring should be a regular gift or an engagement ring.

He thought cautiously, glaring at the silver carat ring with an emerald, wondering if a marriage proposal would be a pleasing birthday present for her.

He then thought back to when they introduced each other to their families during Thanksgiving the year they crossed paths in this city. Although Bill's family never expected the woman he was seeing to be black and Nia's family never envisioned the man she was seeing to be white (Bill and Nia themselves didn't expect it either), they both clicked well with each other even though part of it had to do with their fathers once being colleagues. Rosie already bonded with Bill as if he were his son, and Bill always enjoyed having a beer with Darryl. Also, not only did Nia get along swimmingly with Sue, but she also bonded with Alice, Maureen, and Megan as if they were already sisters-in-law.

Bill was happy for the first time in a long time since being in a relationship with Nia. So, maybe it was about time to start thinking about his plans with her long-term...and perhaps that could include getting married. He hoped it would since this was the year he would turn 30, and he didn't want to spend another decade of his life with a series of failed relationships.

Hopefully, Nia would say yes if he did ask for her hand in marriage, and things wouldn't turn out like they did with him and Pam. After all, what were the odds of another marriage proposal failing for him?

Continuing to stare at the emerald ring, Bill took deep breaths before finally telling the clerk he wanted to purchase the ring.

"I would like the emerald carat, please," requested Bill, pointing his finger at the expensive piece of jewelry.

"Sure thing," the clerk smiled before rambling on about a bunch of details regarding the ring that Bill didn't care about. "Proposing to your girl?"

"Um...I guess," shrugged Bill, chuckling nervously. "But it's mostly for her birthday."

"Well, it could be both," the clerk suggested, giving him a wink. "You would kill two birds with one stone."

"Yes, I'll marry you," accepted Bill, not realizing he sounded more disappointed than ecstatic.

"Are you okay?" Nia asked. "Is that not a real yes?"

"No, it is a real yes. It's just..." Bill sighed. "I was going to propose to you next week. I bought an engagement ring yesterday, and it was going to be your birthday present. I was going to take you to Lake Michigan and ask you to marry me."

"So, I stole your thunder?" Nia chuckled.

"Yes, you kind of did," groaned Bill. "Would you like your ring now or do you want to wait until your birthday?"

"Go ahead and give it to me now. You already told me you bought one," demanded Nia charmingly. "You can propose to me if you would like."

Bill then went to his nightstand, pulled out the box that was hidden in there, and then went back to the living room to give his girlfriend her week-early birthday present.

Getting down on one knee, he held out the box and presented the ring, holding it up high toward Nia as she stood next to him. "Nia Renee Roosevelt, will you do the honor of marrying me?"

"Yes," nodded Nia, allowing Bill to place the emerald ring on her finger before they embraced each other with a kiss and a hug.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this. Please review :)

M is For Miracle

Chapter Summary

Kevin and Alice find out they're expecting.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

April 1, 1992
Staten Island, NY
Staten Island Women's Clinic

Alice restlessly sat in the clinic waiting room, anticipating the blood test results to confirm whether she was pregnant or not. She had left work prematurely for this appointment.

Two years ago, after speaking with a therapist due to the strain in their marriage, she and Kevin stopped trying and made peace with the likelihood that they may never have children. But now, for the past twelve days, she found herself clinging to hope all over again.

For a week, she had been feeling off and uneasy with bouts of nausea and vomiting spells. At first, she assumed it was food poisoning, but when she noticed that her period was late, she took a home pregnancy test that turned out positive.

Unlike the last time she suspected she was pregnant seventeen years ago, Kevin wasn't cognizant of any of her suspicions except for the queasiness (and him telling her she needed to see a doctor for it). Despite the positive result, Alice wouldn't disclose anything about it to him until the doctor confirmed it, because she knew he would be devastated if she told him beforehand and it turned out to be false.

"Mrs. Goldman-Murphy," a nurse called out, gesturing for Alice to come back into an exam room, where a doctor was waiting for her. He had a proud grin when he instructed Alice to sit down.

"Well, I have to say that it's a shame your husband isn't with you right now because I have some excellent news," as he paused for dramatic effect, Alice was already one hundred percent sure what the fantastic news was, yet still decided to let him bask in the glory of informing her. "Congratulations, you're pregnant!"

Despite suspecting it for a week, hearing those words felt surreal for Alice. *I can't believe it. Kevin and I finally did it,* she thought. After five years of trying plus two years of accepting childlessness, they were having a baby.

"Are...are you sure?" Alice questioned warily. "With my husband's low sperm count, we thought a pregnancy was unattainable without assistance."

"This isn't an April Fool's prank," the doctor chuckled, tapping his pen against the clipboard. "Based on the date of your last period, we're estimating that you're approaching eight weeks gestation. You are due in November."

"Oh, my god," Alice choked up with cheerful tears before the doctor continued to convey to her what to expect, prescribe her prenatal vitamins, and schedule her next appointment.

She couldn't wait to break the wonderful news to Kevin.

After arriving home late from the school's monthly staff meeting, Kevin was welcomed by Frodo brushing himself up against his leg and Alice setting the table and preparing for dinner.

However, the apartment's atmosphere was more romantic than usual due to the dimmed lights and the lit candles in the middle of the dinner table...as if tonight was a special occasion except there were no glasses of wine.

"Good evening, yekiri," Alice mused seductively, eyeing her husband suggestively from a distance as he hung his backpack and jacket up on the hall tree.

"Hi, honey," Kevin greeted back as he walked toward his wife to trap her in an embrace and give her a kiss. He then sat at the table, noticing she made stuffed peppers and coq au vin. "Everything looks delicious."

"So, how was work?" Alice asked as they conversed during dinner.

"It was fine, except that Josh kept annoying me and interrupting me with the most cliche April Fool's joke, telling me he saw a UFO outside," groaned Kevin, who had had it with that obnoxious third grader. And speaking of Josh, he and Alice were set on that name if they ever had a son until they had a couple of students who eventually ruined the name. "But to be fair, 5-11 year olds don't know how to properly April Fool someone. How about you?"

"It was typical," sighed Alice. "I just wish Debbie Lozano wasn't selected as my substitute for the rest of the day."

"Oh, that sucks," laughed Kevin, agreeing that Ms. Lozano was the worst substitute in their school district, given how she always let students get away with everything and never disciplined them. "Anyway, what's with the candles? It's not our anniversary or any of our birthdays. Anyway, how was your visit to the doctor? Is everything okay? Are you still feeling sick?"

Alice grinned at Kevin. "A little bit, but the doctor said it's nothing to worry about. You're going to have to get used to it, though. Expect me to be puking almost every day for another month or two."

"I thought you said you were okay?" Kevin questioned quizzically, raising his eyebrow.

"He said the sickness should stop in the second trimester," furthered Alice, trying to get Kevin to catch on to what she was trying to tell him.

Second trimester? Kevin thought, his eyes widening with surprise as he processed the last two words (and remembering her lack of an alcoholic beverage at this moment), finally figuring out what was happening. Honestly, he secretly hoped that's what it was all week, but he didn't suggest that to her as he refused to get his hopes up. "What? Alice, does this mean..."

"I'm pregnant!" Alice exclaimed, her eyes watering with exuberance.

"Alice," Kevin breathed, the confused look on his face forming into a simper before he let out a soft bark of laughter, running his hands through his hair after he let go of his cutlery, allowing it to noisily clatter onto his plate. "Oh, my god! Are you serious?"

"Yep," nodded Alice, overwhelmed by Kevin's unbridled happiness. "The doctor was sure. In November, we're going to have a baby."

"Yes! My balls work!" Kevin hollered happily as he sprang from his chair and jumped for joy at the fact that he was going to be a father. He yanked Alice out of her chair to embrace her into a hug, crying tears of joy as he kissed her.

"Jeez, Kevin," chuckled Alice, blushing as she playfully slapped him on the arm. "I think the neighbors might have heard you."

"Sorry, I'm just so happy," said Kevin as he pecked Alice on the forehead. "I love you," he crowed, placing a hand over her belly, excited for the new chapter in their life after seven years of struggling.

"I love you, too," whispered Alice as she placed her hand over the hand Kevin had on her still flat yet bloated belly.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed. Please review :)

U is For Ultrasound

Chapter Summary

Kevin and Alice announce the pregnancy to their families.

Chapter Notes

I know I'm editing some chapters, but sometimes, I look for better ways to write things and be more descriptive. Still, I hope you enjoy this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

April 19, 1992
Staten Island, NY
Kevin and Alice's Apartment

It had only been two weeks since Kevin and Alice were pleasantly surprised by the news of Alice's pregnancy. Since learning this exciting news, they had ordered Chinese food for dinner, as their excitement often distracted them from cooking. Alice devoured an entire tub of chocolate ice cream alongside her white rice, fulfilling her immediate craving for something sweet while still adhering to kosher laws, even though she wasn't as strictly religious as her parents. Additionally, there were certain foods and smells that Alice could no longer tolerate due to her morning sickness; the smell of brewing coffee being the most prominent trigger.

"So, when and how should we tell our parents?" Kevin, keen on sharing the announcement with those they were close with, asked as he twirled his fork into his lo mein. "We'll eventually have to explain why we can't come to Thanksgiving this year. You are due the week before."

"Right," Alice ceased gobbling her food once she realized when the baby would and could come. "Perhaps we could just surprise them when we visit over the summer?"

"Eh, no way," Kevin nearly choked on a forkful of food, recalling how Erwin had stopped them from having sex (with, in hindsight, a tampered condom) on Christmas Eve back in 1974. "You'll probably be showing by then. Plus, your dad will kill me."

Alice rolled her eyes, both amused and confused by Kevin's sudden fear of his father-in-law's reaction to her pregnancy. After nearly a decade of marriage and five to seven years of trying

to conceive, it seemed out of place. "We're about to turn 33, and we've been married for nine years. Plus, you know my dad likes you. He'll be thrilled to finally have a grandchild."

"Yeah, a grandkid that's half gentile," Kevin pointed out, reminding Alice that, despite converting to Judaism and adopting a (mostly) Jewish lifestyle, he was still considered a gentile to her family. He smirked to indicate that he was joking and not suddenly intimidated by Erwin.

"Please, he won't love our child any less than Daniel and Ruth's future children," reassured Alice.

"I know, but I really don't want to keep this a secret for months. I don't want to just waltz in when you're five months pregnant and have them ask about your belly, only to say, 'Surprise, we're having a baby.' That seems like something my parents would have done if they ever had a fifth child," Kevin objected. "We will have to call them or write a letter."

Alice couldn't help but laugh at Kevin's imitation of those situations. "Yeah, that is pretty anti-climactic. Anyway, this will be your parents' and my parents' first grandchild. Since our first ultrasound is tomorrow, perhaps we can ask Dr. Abrams for some printed copies, mail them to them, and address them as 'Grandma and Grandpa' and 'Bubbe and Zayde'. I think it's possible. We can do the same for Daniel and your siblings," she suggested.

"That's actually not a bad idea," Kevin agreed, excited and fascinated at the idea of seeing his unborn child while they were still in the womb.

The next day, Kevin held Alice's hand while Dr. Abrams stood at the foot of the exam table, performing a transvaginal ultrasound after completing a pelvic exam. The expectant parents were captivated by the screen, their eyes tearing up as they were glued to the image of their baby, which to them, despite looking like nothing more than an abstract gray blob of grain, was still a source of fascination.

Throughout the day, Kevin and Alice struggled to focus on teaching their classes and following their original lesson plans, as their minds were preoccupied with anxieties about the ultrasound, imagining the most possible worst-case scenarios - whether it be a miscarriage or a fatal anomaly. Despite their fears, they held onto hope that everything would turn out alright.

So far, the doctor hasn't mentioned anything concerning. Overall, hearing their child's faint heartbeat was the icing on the cake, and they couldn't help but shed tears of happiness as they were overwhelmed with pure joy as they heard the whooshing noise.

"Now, it's too early to determine the sex..."

"No way! You can do that?" Kevin asked, raising his eyebrow in amazement. Everyone Alice and Kevin knew who had babies didn't find out until after the babies were born.

"Yes, but we won't be able to determine that until the fifth or sixth month," Dr. Abrams confirmed as he wrapped up the procedure. "Given that you are ten weeks along, the fetal

heart rate is normal and everything looks good so far. Nothing out of the ordinary or anything to be concerned about. Once again, congratulations."

As Dr. Abrams disposed of his latex gloves, Alice gradually sat upright on the exam table, her lower half still modestly covered by a sky blue sheet.

"Um, is it possible for us to have copies of the ultrasound pictures?" Alice requested timidly.

"Alice and I want to use those pictures to tell our parents," added Kevin, who still didn't let go of Alice's hand. "And have some copies for just us as well."

"Can we have seven, please?" Alice finalized, doing the mental math in her head to confirm who would receive the news through mailed ultrasound pictures - both their parents, Megan, Bill and Nia, Maureen and Scott, and Daniel and Ruth. The seventh copy would be kept by the parents-to-be themselves. Meanwhile, everyone else - such as co-workers, students, friends, and other relatives - were either going to be told in person, via a phone call, or through someone like their parents or siblings.

"Nobody has ever asked, but...of course," complied Dr. Abrams with a smile as he prepared to leave the room. "I would be happy to do that for you. I'll go ahead and do that."

Once Kevin and Alice were given their privacy after the doctor left the room, the happy couple shared a passionate kiss, excited to tell their families the wonderful news.

Four Days Later...

It had been almost two weeks since Frank and Sue had checked their mail, so they decided to collect it from their mailbox, which was beginning to overflow. Not long after dinner, while Megan lounged on the couch reading a book, Frank and Sue sat at the table to sort through their mail.

"Jesus Christ," Frank cholerically muttered under his breath as he examined the pile of clutter he neglected - magazines and catalogues they needed to unsubscribe from, junk mail, spam, the usual bills, ads and coupons to and from places from Plast-a-Ware to the new restaurant that now replaced Sam's Starving Boy. "We need to be better at checking the mail. Still, nothing exciting."

"Well, maybe except for these," Sue's exasperation suddenly turned relieved when she presented two letters from Kevin and Alice - one addressed to Frank and Sue and another addressed to Megan. It felt like a breath of fresh air.

"Oh, good," Frank chuckled apprehensively, taking the sealed enveloped addressed to him and Sue from his wife's hands. "Something that might be worth reading."

"Megan, you have a letter from Kevin and Alice. Come get it!" Sue called out to her youngest child, who groaned in response.

"Why do I have to get up?" Megan whined from the living room, throwing the book face down and spine up on the couch.

"Don't you 'ugh' me," scolded Sue as Megan defeatedly walked up to the table to retrieve her envelope. "Come over here and get the letter from your brother. We'll open ours together when your father and I finish sorting the mail."

Megan rolled her eyes as she walked back to the living room.

The three of them were sitting at the dinner table when they opened their envelopes simultaneously. Frank, Sue, and Megan each pulled out a black-and-white grainy image. They were all baffled, trying to decipher what it was supposed to be.

"Uh, what the fuck is this?" Frank squinted his eyes, rotating the image as he tried to make out what exactly Kevin and Alice sent him before going on one of his usual rants about one of Megan's favorite bands. "Is this some kind of artwork or something? Because I don't get it. Still, much better than that band with the image of a baby and its dick fishing for a dollar!"

"Dad!" Megan groaned, not wanting to hear another rant about Nirvana. Also, she knew that image couldn't be an album cover because Kevin and his band broke up seven years ago.

"Here, let me see it," demanded Sue, changing the subject back to the confusing image and taking the picture from Frank and then flipping it to where she could see what was written on the back.

Congratulations, Grandma and Grandpa! This November, expect the arrival of your first grandchild. Here is their first picture.
-Kevin and Alice

Megan flipped hers over, and the words "Aunt Megan" caught her attention. Without reading any further, those two words were enough for her to realize what exactly the image was.

"Oh my god! Frank!" Sue exclaimed, tears of joy welling up in her eyes as she read the note, excited about being a grandmother. "Kevin and Alice are having a baby! Megan, honey, you're going to be an aunt!"

"Well, duh," chuckled Megan playfully. "Obviously!"

"Holy shit! It's about time!" Frank's eyes sparkled with joy as he took in the incredible news that had just been shared with him, especially considering the issue with Kevin's...plumbing. "Still, what the fuck is this supposed to be?"

"It's an ultrasound picture, Dad," explained Megan, whose moody demeanor was now ecstatic since learning the news that she would be getting a niece or nephew. "It shows pictures of a baby in the womb. So, that's the baby."

"Oh, my god!" Sue was still overwhelmed with happiness, reaching out for Frank's hand to squeeze it excitedly. "Our first grandbaby! My baby is going to have a baby!"

Despite his frustration in understanding the abstract image, Frank was thrilled to hear the news. He had always felt it would happen eventually, although he didn't think it would be with Kevin due to his issues with fertility. Frank had been hoping for a grandchild for a long time, so it was hard for him to believe he was finally going to become a grandfather to a grandchild who wouldn't be told he lived on a comet.

He was happy for Kevin and Alice, and he couldn't wait to meet his first grandchild. Besides retiring from work, he had another thing to look forward to in 1992.

Meanwhile, Sue was getting ready to call Kevin and Alice to let them know how thrilled she was about the announcement.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed. Please review :)

U&A is For Uncle and Aunt

Chapter Summary

Bill and Nia announce their engagement.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

April 24, 1992
Chicago, IL
Bill and Nia's Apartment

"Should we announce our engagement at my dad's retirement party?" Bill asked Nia, his brow furrowing as they contemplated the best time to share their exciting news with their parents and siblings while sorting through the mail. After all, they had been engaged for a month already and were thinking about a spring wedding for next year.

"Nah, that's way too late," Nia shook her head with a chuckle while chopping vegetables to prepare for dinner. She hoped she wouldn't be called back to the ER any time tonight, as she really wanted to have a nice dinner with her fiancé. "Also, we shouldn't make your dad's party about us. I'd prefer to tell everyone sooner. Maybe a phone call?"

"I guess," sighed Bill as he continued to analyze the envelopes that they had been putting off checking for four days already. Eventually, he noticed a letter from Kevin and Alice, addressed to both him and Nia. "Oh, we got something from Kevin and Alice!" Bill exclaimed, setting it aside as he sorted through the rest of the mail.

"Ooh," cooed Nia, her eyes sparkling with curiosity. "I wonder what it's about. Perhaps they're wishing us a happy Easter or a happy Passover," she said, shrugging her shoulders as her excitement was palpable.

"They've been married for nine years and have been together for 18ish years, and they have never sent one. The only holiday cards they've been sending me are Christmas/Hanukkah cards," Bill pointed out as he opened the letter, pleased to receive mail from his brother instead of more junk that would end up in the recycling bin.

When he opened the envelope, he pulled out some kind of intriguing image of a grainy black and white blob with irregular shapes and curves that danced across the glossy surface. He assumed it to be an ultrasound of a baby, which he knew about since he was engaged to a pediatrician.

Curiosity piqued when he flipped the abstract image over, revealing a neatly handwritten note on the back. When he scanned the writing, the words "Uncle Bill" and "Aunt Nia" leapt out at

him and confirmed his prediction, solidifying the fact that he would soon be stepping into the role of uncle, before he could even begin to read the rest of the note.

"Bill, what does it say?" Nia asked eagerly, her back turned to Bill as she arranged the chopped vegetables in their bowls.

"Well, I'll be damned," Bill chuckled ecstatically, his voice tinged in disbelief and joy as he was thrilled to become an uncle as happy tears filled his eyes.

"What? What's happening," Nia suddenly halted her dinner preparations, hastily dropping some vegetable pieces on the cutting board before darting over to where Bill was sitting at the kitchen table. When she approached behind him and looked over his shoulder, she noticed that Bill was holding a sonogram in his hands. Gasping joyously, Nia instantly covered her hands over her mouth. "Oh, my god!" She squealed and started hopping up and down, excitement bubbling over her. "Are they..."

"Yep," confirmed Bill, gently setting the sonogram down on the table. "Looks like Kevin was finally able to knock up Alice. Looks like two buns will be coming out of the oven this Thanksgiving."

"Holy crap!" Nia squealed, wrapping her arms around Bill while also laughing at his corny joke, despite him sounding like he was implying that they were having twins...even though Nia could tell it was a singleton with her own medical judgement. "That is awesome!"

"It really is," agreed Bill, standing up from his chair, standing up from his chair and holding Nia's hands as they excitedly jumped up and down together, envisioning all the cool uncle stuff he was going to get to do. "We're going to be an aunt and uncle!"

Technically, Nia was already an aunt by blood, and Bill was set to become an uncle to Nia's nephew and soon-to-be-born niece through marriage. However, this would be the first niece or nephew for Bill from one of his own siblings. Since Kevin and Alice had given Nia the title of "aunt" in their announcement letter, she and Bill figured now was the perfect time to announce their engagement to their families.

Bill was delighted for Kevin and Alice and thrilled to be an uncle. He was also eager to share his own good news. Things were finally looking up for both of the Murphy brothers.

Bill and Nia's private celebration was suddenly interrupted by the blue kitchen bellsouth phone ringing. "Really, at this hour?" Bill grumbled, walking over toward the counter to answer whatever telemarketer was calling. "Hello," he replied, assuming it was another salesman. To his surprise and delight, it was his mother on the line.

"Oh, Bill!" Sue gushed on the other end. *"Did Kevin and Alice tell you yet?"*

"Yes, they did. We found out just now," Bill replied proudly, folding his arms. "They sent me and Nia the ultrasound picture. Damn, I thought it would never happen."

"I know, right? Finally!" Sue beamed. *"They sent us one, too."*

"Hi, Sue!" Nia called out so her soon-to-be mother-in-law would hear her.

"H i, Nia! How are you ?"

"I'm good," replied Nia, winking at Bill and whispering to him as she covered up the bottom of the handset. "Go ahead, tell her."

Bill nodded in agreement before Nia removed her hand so Sue could hear them again. "Mom, are Dad and Megan home?" He swooned, smirking.

"Yeah, why?" Sue questioned suspiciously, a tinge of worry in her voice.

"Good, because you need to get them over here right now. Nia and I also have an announcement to make," stated Bill confidently, excited to break the news to his parents.

"Okay," said Sue, whose calling out to Megan and Frank could be heard on the other end. Bill and Nia heard Megan's "hi" followed by his father's voice. *"Hey, Billy. How are you and Nia doing? Did you know that Kevin..."* Frank's voice asked faintly.

"Hi, Frank. We're doing good," replied Nia.

"And yes, we are aware that Alice is pregnant," added Bill.

"So, your mother told me you and Nia have an announcement, too. What is it?" Frank questioned, despite being one hundred percent sure what the good news was going to be.

Pausing for dramatic effect and giving it three seconds, Bill and Nia hollered joyfully into the phone in unison, smiling at each other. "We're getting married!"

The engaged couple suddenly heard cheers and screams of excitement on the other end.

Megan was squealing in the background. *"Yes! Oh, my god! I knew it! I knew she was going to be the one!"*

"Congratulations, you two," Sue saluted, trying to hold back her tears as she was overwhelmed by the barrage of good news she had received from her sons. *"We're so happy for you."*

Even though it was only a superstition, Frank and Sue figured Bill and Nia would eventually get married since Bill caught the garter and Nia caught the bouquet at Maureen's wedding.

"Damn! So much good news!" Frank's shouts of excitement could be heard pretty clearly on the other end. *"Retirement, a grandchild, and another wedding! Thank you God for giving old Frank Murphy a win! Let's strike up the band!"* Frank imitated a fake drum roll.

"Dad! Ugh!" Megan groaned.

Bill and Nia laughed as they heard Frank, Sue, and Megan in the background.

After calling Nia's parents to announce their engagement, Bill and Nia were now going to call Maureen to share their exciting news, as Scott wasn't home since he was back in Rustvale for his grandmother's funeral.

"Now all three of the adult Murphy kids will be married," observed Maureen. *"I think you made the right choice with Nia. When you caught the garter and Nia caught the flowers, I knew she was the one. I was hoping for things to last with her."*

"That was just a coincidence, but thank you," acknowledged Bill, yet proudly accepting Maureen's compliment regarding his and Nia's fate. "Also, did you get any mail from Kevin and Alice yet?"

"Yes, I haven't opened the letter yet, but I'm opening it right now," confirmed Maureen, as she was still unaware of the delightful news she was about to discover.

"Well, I'll wait for you to read it because Nia and I got one, too," Bill smirked, anticipating Maureen's reaction to being an aunt as he and Nia waited for her to read it. They could hear Maureen muttering under her breath on the other end of the line.

"Congratulations, Aunt Maureen and Uncle Scott..." Maureen muttered quietly before her voice level rose with excitement once she took in what was being said in the letter and what the image sent was. *"Is Alice finally pregnant? Because I think they sent me an ultrasound picture."*

"Yep. We got one, too," affirmed Nia.

Maureen beamed, happy for Kevin and Alice. *"Bill, we're going to be an aunt and Uncle!"*

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed. Please review :)

R is For Retirement

Chapter Summary

Frank celebrates his retirement with his family.

Chapter Notes

Now that school is out and I'm not teaching summer school this year, I finally have more time on my hands, so I might be able to get more chapters uploaded.

Anyway, I also realized that this chapter and Chapter 1 would have been great flashforwards if the show ever decided to end with one.

Also, I just realized that the Expecting/Excited/Engaged/Egg Salad meme perfectly captures the status of my headcanon of the kids in 1992.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

July 4, 1992
Rustvale, PA
The Murphy House

Like he always did, Frank woke up at 5:00 am with an aging Scout asleep on Sue's empty side of the bed.

However, this time was different for a few reasons. First, he didn't have to work anymore, so he shut off his alarm. Second, he didn't need to wake any of his kids, as most of them were staying as guests; it was Saturday, and it was summer. Third, Sue was already downstairs cooking breakfast for the nine people currently in the house. Next year, there would eventually be ten.

For the first time in a long while, Frank was genuinely at his happiest and most satisfied. After working at the airport for 38 years and witnessing its transformation from Mohican to Alahican Airways and then to American Airlines, he was finally retired from his dead-end job. Now, he could spend the rest of his days in peace with Sue and have more opportunities to visit his extended family, which was about to grow even larger.

In addition to that, he had other reasons to be happy. Another kid was getting married next year, one was a happy newlywed, he had a grandbaby on the way, and his youngest child was starting her senior year of high school and would be heading off to college next year.

Although everyone at American Airlines at Rustbelt Memorial Airport insisted on throwing a retirement party for Frank on his last day, which was last week, he refused to have one with his colleagues because he couldn't tolerate half of them. Instead, he would be celebrating with Sue, Megan, his adult children, and their spouses (or soon-to-be spouse) during the annual Fourth of July block party. Rosie would also be joining the celebration since he and Frank were about to become in-laws.

Frank also insisted on taking his kids and their spouses to Lake Wawayanda as well, for the first time in 18 years now that environmental regulations and clean-ups made the lake safe for swimming again and the conditions of the cabins (especially the murder cabin) had improved. However, it would only be him, Sue, and Megan going to the lake this time. Because of how it went down in the summer of 1974, the adult Murphy children didn't want to go back there.

Kevin didn't want to see the place where he almost drowned twice again, and now the thought of his baby being near large bodies of water was kind of terrifying for him. Also, his pregnant wife would not handle a long drive or stay in a crowded cabin or motel well.

Maureen was afraid to swim in Lake Wawayanda since jumping into it back when it was contaminated with oil. Moreover, in hindsight, the carnie who helped her excel at the ring toss was nuts, and she got more creeped out by him the older she got. She didn't want to go back in case he still lived in that amusement park.

Bill, on the other hand, was still traumatized by the fire he accidentally set on the once-polluted lake.

Since Frank was finally free from the stress of a full-time job, he decided to use this early morning time to sleep in and see what's on TV on the television set he and Sue now had in their room. He would have liked to have morning intimacy with Sue, but they had house guests. She always tended to go overboard when they had visitors, and since these guests were their adult children along with their significant others, she felt particularly inclined to make a special effort when it came to cooking.

Sue had prepared a special breakfast consisted of freshly and continuously brewed coffee (decaf as an alternative for Alice), orange juice, bacon, scrambled eggs, pancakes, fresh fruit, blueberry and banana muffins, and bagels with options of jelly, cream cheese, salmon, and lox. Since Alice became part of the family, and Kevin converted for her, Sue always made sure there were a variety of kosher options for them whenever she cooked for her extended family.

The Murphys were happily enjoying their breakfast at the expandable dining table that could accommodate up to ten people. Since the makeshift kids' table Frank and Sue had would soon be reserved for their unborn grandchild and other possible future grandchildren, and since their children's spouses would also need a place to sit that wasn't at the kids' table, they recently invested in that extendable table.

Frank and Sue sat at both ends of the table, smiling at each other in bliss, surrounded by their four children and their children-in-law. They also realized they were probably soon going to have to invest in a high chair for their grandchild.

In fact, since the adult children started bringing home girlfriends and boyfriends, Frank and Sue made several adjustments to their home to accommodate the expanding family.

Typically, when the adult Murphy children visited, they slept in their old bedrooms, which had been converted into guest rooms or office spaces (even the basement). Their twin beds were replaced with full-size beds when their romantic partners started coming home with them. Anticipating that Megan would soon start bringing boyfriends home from college next year, Frank and Sue went ahead and gave her a full-size bed as well.

This time, Kevin and Alice and Bill and Nia switched rooms for this visit since they collectively agreed that a pregnant woman shouldn't sleep in the cellar outside the house. Kevin also mentioned that sleeping in the cellar in his thirties was much more difficult now compared to his teenage years and early twenties. Basically, he, Bill, Maureen, and Megan agreed that they would probably have to rotate rooms every family together.

Kevin and Alice, who was five months pregnant and showing a noticeable belly, were seated to Sue's right. At their appointment last week, they were offered the chance to find out the gender of their baby but chose to keep it a surprise, as they had yearned for a baby for so long. Overall, Frank and Sue were thrilled about the anticipated arrival of their first grandchild in November. For that reason, they decided to spend Thanksgiving in New York with Kevin and Alice.

Bill and Nia, who had their wedding date set for March but were still debating the location, were seated to Frank's left, each placing a hand on the other's thigh as they ate breakfast. Nia was about to enter the last year of her pediatric residency before becoming a full-time attending physician. However, she was considering the possibility of working in a small doctor's office instead of a hospital in the future, due to the emotional exhaustion associated with ER, PICU, and NICU work, as well as the better hours that would allow her more time with her family. Since Bill and Nia got engaged, Frank was glad to have finally reconnected with Rosie after a long time.

Maureen and Scott, seated to Frank's right across from Bill and Nia, just smiled at each other as they sipped their coffee. Earlier, Sue had asked Maureen with curiosity if she and Scott planned on having children. Maureen replied that it was in their plan, but they intended to wait a few years to pay off their small student loans from earning their doctorates. They also wanted to savor their time together as a couple for a while longer.

Megan was seated across from Kevin to Sue's left, contemplating whether Monday was a good time to start working on her college application essays since summer seemed to offer her the most free time. After all, during her senior year, she wanted to maintain a good GPA, stay committed to the debate team, save all her earnings from her part-time job at the movie theater, and make the most of her time with friends. However, she still needed to choose a major, and she was growing tired of her siblings and parents constantly asking her about it.

Eventually, the family's bliss was interrupted by the ringing of the kitchen phone. "Why does this always have to happen when I'm eating," Frank grumbled, ready for the answering machine to pick up soon. He was also hoping the phone would stop ringing and then there would be complete silence, which would likely mean it was just a telemarketer.

Although Frank learned to just ignore the inconvenience of sales calls, he still had a bad habit of threatening prank callers. He especially enjoyed responding to one kid, who had a habit of prank calling everyone with joke names. No matter how funny Megan found those calls to be, Frank would always threaten to put the caller through the wall before hanging up.

The three older Murphy kids felt somewhat jealous of Megan because she rarely had to witness their father yelling and cursing at the neighborhood kids or people on the phone. In fact, they didn't want their own kids to see that side of their Grandpa Frank at all.

"Frank, just relax and enjoy your breakfast with your family," reassured Sue, not wanting to have the kids' visit spoiled. Also, she didn't want their grandchildren to only know Frank as a grouchy curmudgeon. "Don't get all worked up about a phone ringing. And if it's the kid who joke calls us again, just ignore him. You have got to let those kinds of calls go. Remember, the doctor said all that unnecessary anger is bad for your blood pressure."

"Ah, yeah," sighed Frank happily, though mildly annoyed. He felt relieved that he would no longer have to deal with his colleagues and employees at the airport trying to contact him outside of work hours. Still, he couldn't shake the frustration caused by the local prank caller. "The beauty of an answering machine," he said to himself.

Eventually, the phone stopped ringing, and the answering machine didn't record anything.

"Ha, I knew it was just a fucking salesman!" Frank chuckled loudly, stabbing his fork into his pancakes. He was happy to be enjoying a peaceful breakfast with his family and not letting any phone call, even an annoying prank call, disrupt the happy moment or ruin this get-together. "There's no way I'm going to answer that fucking call!"

"Dad, can you please not cuss around the baby," Kevin chastised with a frown, gently placing a hand on Alice's protruding belly. She rolled her eyes at her husband's overprotectiveness. "I don't want my child to come out cursing like a sailor."

"Well, the baby was born of seamen," Bill joked quietly, which caused Kevin and Alice to turn red and roll their eyes. His remark eventually earned him a groan and a dirty look from Nia and Sue, but it also got a few laughs from Frank, Megan, Maureen, and Scott.

"You are dead," scoffed Kevin, pointing his finger at Bill, who was still smirking.

"All of you knock it off!" Frank raised his voice before collecting himself and taking a deep breath. Even as grown-ass adults (or soon-to-be-adult in Megan's case), his kids were starting shit with each other...despite it being more lighthearted this time. "Relax, Kevin," Frank rolled his eyes before sipping his coffee. "The baby didn't hear that! It's only half done cooking!"

"Um, yes...it...did," retorted Kevin haughtily. "The books said that the baby can hear sounds around 18 weeks."

"Whatever you say," Frank muttered, realizing that he was going to have to watch his language and his tone around his grandchildren. No grandkid of his was going to learn the word "cocksucker" before the age of 10.

He also thought back to what Kevin mentioned seconds ago about the baby being able to hear him. Admittedly, he and Sue were kind of baffled by how much had changed with pregnancy and parenthood since the kids were born.

Goddamn Dr. Spock, Frank often thought.

First of all, Kevin appeared to be much more engaged - and genuinely happy to be involved - with his wife's pregnancy than Frank ever was for all four of Sue's. He was reading every book he could on parenting, pregnancy, and childbirth. He attended every birthing, breastfeeding, and childcare classes with Alice. Speaking of, Frank was honestly a bit weirded out that Alice was choosing to feed the baby the way a hippie would.

Additionally, since learning they would be grandparents, there were many surprising new aspects they learned about. Not only had twilight sleep vanished and fathers were now expected to be there during the birth, but there were also things like in-vitro fertilization, at-home pregnancy tests, prenatal vitamins, changes in what an expectant mother should and shouldn't consume, a baby rooming in with its mother in her hospital room, seeing early imaging of the baby before its birth, and even the opportunity to learn whether it was a boy or girl.

All in all, Sue couldn't help but admire and be proud of Kevin for his extra involvement and dedication to his pregnant wife and unborn child.

Eventually, it was only a matter of time before Frank's blissful moment would get interrupted again when he noticed Goomer spying on them through the kitchen door's window.

"Son of a bit...biscuit," Frank muttered under his breath, realizing he needed to work on practicing not to curse around his grandchild. "Goomer, go home!"

Although Goomer had been acting this way since Frank and Sue moved into this neighborhood, they were getting sick of this behavior. Speaking of which, Frank noticed over the years that some pairs of his pants seemed to be stretched out.

Once Goomer realized he was caught, he immediately darted back to his own house, leaving all four of the Murphy offspring plus their significant others cringing in discomfort at the strange neighbor's actions.

Wait, wasn't that my shirt? Kevin wondered as he noticed that Goomer was wearing a boxy, patterned shirt that was a bit too small for his body and stretching out.

Due to Kevin spilling the beans years ago, and because he was able to piece together information when Erwin mentioned a patient who defecated in the woods and broke into his neighbors' houses, the entire family learned that Goomer was a former patient of the now retired Dr. Goldman (who also provided a few family therapy sessions for the Murphys for free back in the 70s). Once the kids discovered this information, their unease about Goomer only grew, and they insisted that their parents keep all the doors and windows extra locked.

Speaking of the creeps of Rustvale, Alice had an irrational fear of running into local news anchor Jim Jeffords, who recently retired from the spotlight but probably still resided

somewhere in the Quint City area. There were rumors that he had a fetish for pregnant women, and her mother-in-law told her that those rumors were actually true because she recounted how Jim Jeffords hit on her as Hobo Jojo and would even spy on her and other mothers-to-be during their Lamaze class.

Frank tried to ignore Goomer's disruption and managed to transition back to a relaxed demeanor. "Now, back to our..."

However, the peaceful breakfast was once again interrupted by Ginny Deichpfister.

"Murphys! Aw, sweet and happy Murphys!" The woman, who was outside doing her morning walk with her dog, called out in her usually annoying voice and walked up to knock on the door.

"Ah, fuck me," everyone in the house - Frank, Sue, Kevin, Bill, Maureen, Megan, Alice, Nia, and Scott - grumbled in unison.

Hoping this woman would get the fuck out of here as soon as possible, Sue immediately got out of her seat to answer the door, thinking of the most polite way to shoo her away because she knew she would keep knocking until someone answered.

"Morning, Ginny," Sue feigned a smile after opening the door. "Look, I'm having breakfast with my family, so..."

"Oh, Sue! I just came to tell you how excited I am about the block party this afternoon!" Ginny began to ramble.

"That's great, Ginny. See you there. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to get back to breakfast with my family," sighed Sue, preparing to close the door before Ginny launched into her sob story about how Connor hardly visits and Greg Jr. won't even speak to her since he joined that anti-gay cult-like church in Nebraska that recently made the news last year for picketing a military funeral.

Eventually, Sue put her foot down and confronted Ginny about her children. As much as Sue pitied the woman for the relationship she had with her sons, if she continued to listen to Ginny, she would never leave.

"Look Ginny. Greg Jr. may have decided to cut ties with you, but Connor is visiting you right now," she scolded, trying her best to hide her agitation. "All of my kids are home right now, and I would like to savor every moment with them. So why don't you go do that with Connor!"

"You're right," sighed Ginny sadly, yet understanding that she was wasting her chance with Connor. "I'll see you later."

Having his whole family and the entire cul-de-sac, as well as a couple other close friends, gathered at the Fourth of July block party that also coupled as his retirement party was a blessing for Frank.

Not only was his entire extended family (his wife, all his children and children-in-law, his mother, Eileen and Lois, Louis and Ray, and the family dog) celebrating with him, but there was also Rosie, Georgia, Darryl, his wife Tina, their three-year-old son Tyler, their newborn daughter Amber, Otto, Goomer, Evelyn, Babe, Marie, Nana Rose, Phillip, his wife Lisa, Anthony, Vic, his wife Beverly, their 14-year-old son Chad, their 12-year-old daughter Tiffany, Vic Jr., Ginny, her girlfriend Patsy, Connor, and his wife Annette.

He and Rosie both wished that Smokey was still alive, as Frank would have loved to invite his old boss. Unfortunately, Smokey passed away eight years ago at the age of 73 after a short battle with pancreatic cancer. On his deathbed, he confessed that he had poked holes in all the condoms he stocked in the machines. On the bright side, at least he had a chance to make amends with Larry before he died.

There were no children under ten at the block party, except for Darryl's two kids. Baby Amber was being held in the arms of her parents while three-year-old Tyler was plopped down in the driveway next to Scout, playing with dog once he got tired of bouncing his ball.

Sue and Georgia were standing next to one of the cars in the driveway, chatting animatedly about their excitement over their children getting married and the joys of being grandmothers.

Ginny, her girlfriend Patsy, Evelyn, Beverly, and Marie (who still lived in the neighborhood despite being divorced from Babe) stood near one of the snack tables, gossiping about who knows what. Beverly, on the other hand, just pretended to be interested, as she wasn't one to engage herself in gossip, before slowly walking away.

Goomer and Babe were enjoying the buzz of the patriotic punch while talking to Vic, who was operating the boombox and cassette tapes with the help of Louis and Ray, as Vic was always in charge of the music each year.

Kevin and Alice were sitting with an aging Otto, who was admiring the expectant parents as he had known both of them since they were little. While reminiscing to them about how he remembered when Alice was just a baby and when Kevin and Greg Throater Jr. played in the street together, he also congratulated them on their blessed event. The old man never had children of his own with Mary due to the forced sterilization he endured at Auschwitz and because he lost his first wife to the Holocaust before they could even reach that milestone. Despite that trauma and devastation, the children in the neighborhood and at Temple Beth always brought him joy and filled the void in his childless life.

Bill and Nia were standing with Darryl and Tina near little Tyler, having a great time as they talked about all the exciting things that were happening in their lives as they sipped their White House beers.

Megan was hanging out in Vic's driveway with Vic Jr, Chad, and Tiffany, drinking soda while playing basketball with the three Reynolds kids.

Maureen and Scott were enjoying White House beers while chatting with Phillip, Lisa, Connor, and Annette. Marie didn't hear it, but Phillip and Lisa were venting to their childhood friends about how Phillip's mother being overbearing with her adult sons was

annoying...and Maureen could tell by Anthony's behavior (Phillip told her that Anthony's girlfriend broke up with him because he was too immature and being too much of a Mama's boy).

Speaking of Anthony, the 23-year-old had joined his older brother's group and started gaining their attention by acting like his five-year-old self again.

"Hey, Phillip," Anthony began as he approached them, repeating the same phrase in a child-like voice like a record player to get their attention. "You know what...you know what...you know what..."

Phillip and the rest of the group just rolled their eyes at Anthony's immature behavior. It may have been cute when he was five, but not when he was 23. In Phillip's opinion, Anthony was very spoiled and entitled, and his mother kind of encouraged this behavior all his life...and eventually might have lead to him getting kicked out of college and why Anthony was never able to keep a girlfriend.

"You know what, Anthony? You're a grown-ass man!" Phillip screamed at his brother, who had grown tired of his man-child brother's bullshit years ago. "This is getting old!"

"Oh, come on!" Anthony's voice suddenly transitioned back to his regular adult voice as he grabbed a can of beer and opened it, deciding to join the group as an adult. "I'm just messing with you guys, giving you some nostalgia."

Nora and Nana Rose were sitting together in the shade of the Bonfiglio porch, Nana Rose rambling on and on while Nora just pretended to listen, trying her best to get drunk on the patriotic punch. Thankfully, nobody (especially the Roosevelts, Otto, Alice, Nia, Scott, or even the three elder Murphy kids) heard Nana Rose (who was in the early stages of Alzheimer's) say anything racist or anti-Semitic, complain about how she thought intermarriage was ruining society, or even her accidental slip-outs of how Babe was actually her nephew.

As Frank basked in the personal glory of looking forward to some years of goddamn peace and quiet, he was approached by Rosie giving him a pat on the back.

"Well, congratulations, Pops," saluted Rosie with a tease, raising his can of beer in the air, to which Frank clinked his against before they mutually took a celebratory sip from their cans. "You're going to have so much fun in your retirement."

"Thanks, Rosie," Frank laughed heartily, a mix of joy and surprise bubbling inside him at being called "Pops". It felt exhilarating yet also strange that he was about to be someone's grandfather. Well, with two of his kids already married and one about to get married, it was obviously bound to happen soon.

"Grandchildren," Rosie reminisced happily as he eyed his own grandchildren before sharing with Frank every awesome thing about being a grandfather. "They're the best part of retirement, and they're also a bigger blessing because you can get away with spoiling them. You can serve them all the junk food they like and give them so many toys. It is so satisfying

when you give them chocolate and then leave them with their parents as they deal with them racing all over the house and screaming at the top of their lungs."

"Ha! Ha!" Frank chuckled, nudging Rosie gently. "Best revenge ever!"

"Darryl gets so mad whenever Georgia and I take Tyler out for ice cream and let him stay up past his bedtime," Rosie shared joyously.

"I see that," agreed Frank, loving the idea of having all the fun he could have with his grandchildren yet not have to raise them. "And the best part, I'm not responsible for those animals at the end of the day. They'll be the kids' problem."

He then viewed with fulfillment at the beautiful sights of all four of his children from a distance - Kevin treating his pregnant wife like a delicate flower, Bill and his fiancée playing with their nephew and niece, Maureen and her husband being affectionate with each other, and Megan hanging out with Vic's kids.

My kids turned out alright, Frank thought satisfactorily as he thought about how proud he was of all of his kids despite all the challenges he had with raising them. He never got to be a pilot, but he was satisfied to no longer be working and have more to look forward to in his golden years.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoy. Please review :)

T is For Thanksgiving

Chapter Summary

Kevin and Alice have Thanksgiving with their parents.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

November 26, 1992
Staten Island, NY
Kevin and Alice's House

Since Alice was nine months pregnant and in no condition to travel, Frank, Sue, and Megan were spending Thanksgiving in New York with her and Kevin, and possibly to meet the baby, who could arrive any moment since Alice had been one centimeter dilated for three days. For the first time, not all of Frank and Sue's kids were present with them for this holiday. Bill and Nia were spending theirs in Quint City with Nia's family, while Maureen and Scott were spending theirs at home in Los Angeles with Scott's parents and sister visiting them.

Additionally, Alice's parents had already arrived in Staten Island a week earlier to help out and were going to be joining them for Thanksgiving. On an unrelated note, Erwin and Rebekah also had another grandchild on the way through Daniel and his wife, who was due in June of the following year.

Kevin and Alice had everything in their new home everything prepped and readied for their baby. Two months ago, they moved out of their tiny apartment and settled into a practical three-bedroom house. The music-themed nursery was beautiful and inviting, thanks to Kevin's hard work over the past two months in painting and getting the room together. Last month, Bill helped Kevin assemble the crib and other nursery furniture during his visit while on a business trip to New York, using that opportunity to see his brother.

Since the baby could come any day now, the hospital bags were packed, the carseat was installed, and Kevin always had his pager on him whenever he was out of the house so Alice would be able to alert him immediately when she was in labor.

Speaking of labor, everyone was hoping this baby would make its grand entrance soon because Alice was a week overdue, and she was becoming increasingly impatient.

At this point, she was just done. The extra weight was a burden on her back and pelvis, making her feel as though she had a bowling ball strapped to her. In addition, with the baby pushing on her bladder, using her stomach as a speedbag, and constantly kicking, she had to pee every five minutes and the acid reflux was at its worst. Speaking of that, when she tried

to naturally induce her labor a few days ago by eating tortilla chips heavily dipped in salsa at Carlos's Mexican Restaurant, all that did was give her heartburn all night.

Instead of engaging in the chaos of socializing or kitchen meals, Alice opted to lie down on the couch and enjoy a moment of peace with Frodo resting at her swollen feet.

Meanwhile, Kevin was in the kitchen preparing dinner, gratefully accepting the extra hands from Sue and Rebekah, both of whom insisted on helping him get the feast cooked while his heavily pregnant wife rested.

Frank, Erwin, and Megan lounged in the living room in separate cushions, watching the football game between the Giants and the Cowboys. Frank and Erwin exchanged lively banter between sips of beer, their enthusiasm rising and falling with every action on the TV. However, every so often, Erwin's attention drifted away from the action as he checked on his daughter's well-being. Megan, on the other hand, stared mindlessly at the TV, impatiently waiting for dinner to be ready, as she was starving.

"Hey," Kevin warmly greeted his wife when he appeared in the living room, gently lifting her feet up, easing them onto his lap as he settled down beside her on their plaid green couch.

"Hey," Alice beamed, allowing him to lovingly caress her belly as he waited for the baby to kick. It was a tender moment, one that made them forget the curious glances from Megan and their dads, who were more engrossed in the football game than the sweet scene unfolding beside them. "How is everything in the kitchen?"

"It's almost ready," answered Kevin, gently gliding his fingers across Alice's shin. "Our moms are just putting the final touches on it. They insisted I take a break since I spent all day doing most of the cooking."

Alice's smile faded as she winced, feeling yet another throb in her lower back, which had been bothering her since last night. Due to that, she just wanted to get up and walk around for a minute, not caring about dinner almost being ready; she was more preoccupied with hoping her labor would finally begin.

"Kevin," she said. "Could you please help me up? I'm going to get some tea."

"Of course," Kevin replied, his brow furrowing with concern as he stood up and used all his strength to pull his pregnant wife off the couch, determined to help her in any way he could. In fact, he knew she was going to have more of that raspberry leaf tea, another way she tried to induce her labor naturally.

"Yekiri, I'm fine," Alice reassured him, though a heavy breath escaped her as she pressed her hands firmly against her aching back. She felt immense pressure followed by a sharp, gripping pain in her belly, causing her to wince loudly and startle everyone in the house - her husband, her parents, her parents-in-law, and her sister-in-law. The contraction lasted less than a second before quickly subsiding once she moved a little bit.

"Alice, is it time?" Rebekah called out from the kitchen, her voice a blend of concern and excitement as she set down the dish she'd been preparing, ready to spring into action.

Alice let out a groan of disappointment when she realized it wasn't a real contraction. "No, I think it's just Braxton Hicks again." Just four days ago, she and Kevin had to face the letdown of a false alarm when they drove all the way to the hospital. Since that disappointing trip to the hospital, they quickly learned the difference between false labor and real labor contractions.

"Here, let me make your tea for you," Kevin suggested gently, observing his wife's struggle to maintain her balance as she leaned against the couch for support. He placed his hands around her shoulders to attempt to help her back on the couch.

"Kevin, I'm fine," Alice protested, lifting her hands off the arm of the couch. "I can get it myself."

"Peanut, you should let him fix it up for you," Erwin chimed in, showing concern for his daughter. "You should sit down and pick your feet up."

"Dad, seriously, I'm fine. I'm pregnant, not sick," Alice huffed, rolling her eyes as she waddled her way to the kitchen. As much as she enjoyed Kevin's pampering and attentiveness throughout these past nine months, his protectiveness could be overbearing and a bit much sometimes.

And to top it all off, her parents have started to drive her crazy since their arrival.

As dinner commenced after a heartfelt prayer mixed with both Judaism and Catholicism, other than the typical conversations about work and school, the evening was also filled with laughter and lively discussions about the baby and Megan's acceptance into UPitt...as well as a side conversation between Megan and Erwin about Megan's interest in majoring in psychology.

For Kevin and Alice, the sight of all four of their child's grandparents together brought a comforting feeling of joy to them. Laughter echoed around the dining room as Sue recounted the hilarious memory of how Frank, in a moment of sheer panic, mistook Sue's bout of indigestion for labor was about to deliver Megan with barbeque tongs.

"He knocked everything off the table, and then told me to get on the table and take off my pants!" Sue burst into laughter as she shared that story, her cackle infectious as everyone at the table couldn't imagine that scene without keeping a straight face.

"The other night, Kevin freaked out when I threw the covers off," shared Alice. "I kicked the covers off because I was getting up to go to the bathroom, but he thought I was in labor."

Kevin chimed in playfully. "What can I say? I'm always on high alert for any signs that you might be ready to deliver!"

"Oh, please," chuckled Erwin, a mischievous glint in his eye as he prepared to spill his own embarrassing story about impending fatherhood. "I remember when Rebekah's water broke with Alice."

"Dad," Alice blushed, giggling a little bit as she tried to hide her smirk.

"It was the middle of the night, I was still half asleep, and I panicked. I left the house without any shoes and sped off to the hospital without her. I even fainted when the nurse showed me Alice in the nursery. I just can't imagine what I would've been like if fathers were allowed in the delivery room sooner."

"Oh, Jesus. That one is the winner," Frank burst into laughter, unable to contain himself before giving Kevin the best bare minimum advice he could give about being a birth partner. "Son, speaking of being in the delivery room, just stay at the head of the bed and shut up. That's what I did when Megan was born. When you and Bill were born, all I could do was sit in the waiting room and eat a hoagie. When Maureen was born, I was stuck at work while Otto looked after you and Bill. But, I was in there when Megan was born, and I'm glad I was. It was so much better than waiting it out in the waiting room."

"Dad!" Megan stifled a groan as her father shot her a playful wink across the dinner table. As much as she was excited about being an aunt, she really didn't enjoy any of the discussions she had heard about childbirth and any of the detailed information about pregnancy, especially when she was eating.

Unbeknownst to everyone else at the table, Alice was wondering if the contraction she felt as they were sitting down was a real one while Kevin was discreetly getting ready to time them if she had another one.

"So, have you two settled on any names for the baby yet?" Rebekah inquired, a spark of curiosity in her eyes.

"We are definitely naming him Samuel if it's a boy," Kevin shared with a smile, Alice smiling in return as she reached out to squeeze his hand. "Thankfully, neither of us have had any students named Sam yet that we can't stand."

"But when it comes to a girl's name, we're still debating," added Alice with a playful grin.

"Well, I have to say, I think Samuel is a good choice," Erwin remarked, swirling his wine in the glass before taking a thoughtful sip. "It has roots in both the Torah and the Bible, which suits this little one perfectly."

Sue looked up from her plate, curiously lighting up her eyes. "Any girl names you have in mind?" She asked, jabbing her fork in her food.

"We actually have a few nailed down, but we haven't yet settled on a final choice," Alice answered. "Right now, it's between Lindsey, Michaela, Morgan, Natalie, or Sabrina."

"Those are lovely names," complimented Sue enthusiastically.

"Morgan, Lindsey," Frank raised his eyebrow as he muttered those names. "Aren't those boy's names?"

"Frank," Sue gritted her teeth.

"They're becoming more associated and popular with girls now," mused Kevin. "One of my students, her new baby sister is named Morgan. And every student named Lindsey I have had has been a girl."

"Damn, what is it with all these boy names becoming names for girls?" Frank gruffed, shaking his head in disbelief. "Kevin, remember when I thought Leslie Schultz from your Kindergarten class was a boy?"

"Vaguely," sighed Kevin. He briefly remembered Leslie Schultz, but did not remember when his father thought she was a boy.

"Still, those names are..." Alice began, her voice trailing off as a sudden contraction gripped her, causing her to groan in response. The back pains still hadn't disappeared, and she was wondering if she was already in labor. After all, the books said that was a symptom of labor...and this contraction felt much stronger than the Braxton Hicks she had been having.

"Alice, are you alright?" Kevin asked, mentally taking note of the duration of that contraction as well as the time between that one and the last one.

"Yeah," Alice exhaled after the contraction was finished, her tone sounding a bit more excited than terrified; Megan was shocked at how calm she and Kevin were. "I think that was a real one."

"Shouldn't we go to the hospital?" Megan asked, jumping up from her chair and her brow furrowing as she glanced around at the others seated at the table, seemingly unfazed by the urgency of the situation.

Alice leaned back in her chair, a calm smile on her face. "No need to rush yet, she assured. "The doctor said it's better to come when the contractions are five minutes apart and last a full minute each...or when my water breaks. We have plenty of time."

"I guess we got ourselves a little party crasher," quipped Frank, referring to his grandchild. His joke was followed by a laugh from the rest of the table.

As the evening unfolded, the Goldmans and the Murphys managed to make it through dinner and dessert as Kevin kept a watchful eye on Alice's contractions or any other symptom that would warrant them to get to the hospital.

Eventually, by the time they all decided to call it a night and go to bed at 9:00, Alice's water broke followed by her mucus plug coming loose. Once that happened, the entire family headed for the hospital.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed. Please review :)

N is For Natalie

Chapter Summary

Kevin and Alice have their first child.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

November 27, 1992
Staten Island, NY
Staten Island Memorial Hospital

Most of the people throughout every borough of New York City - residents and visitors alike - were spending the day after Thanksgiving either simply enjoying themselves and their families at home, exploring the beauty and culture of the city, or carelessly raiding the stores and malls to take advantage of the best Black Friday sales and deals.

However, the Murphys and Goldmans were spending theirs at the hospital, eagerly awaiting the arrival of a new family member. They had been camping out in the waiting room since midnight, having eaten breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the hospital cafeteria and occasionally dozing off in the cramped vinyl waiting room chairs.

Until Alice was nine centimeters dilated (and it had been an hour since that was announced), either Sue or Rebekah would go into Alice's room every half hour to support her and Kevin - and also take over Kevin's duties as a birthing partner for a few minutes while he left the room to get ice chips.

Now, it was already a quarter past 11:00 pm, and Frank, Sue, Megan, Erwin, and Rebekah were all wondering if this baby would be born before midnight.

Each set of grandparents held tightly onto their spouses' hands, a mix of emotions washing over them - apprehension, nervousness, excitement, exhaustion, boredom, and impatience. Erwin and Rebekah were whispering a prayer in Hebrew, hoping that everything was going well for their daughter and grandchild. Among them, Frank stood out as the epitome of impatience, often checking his watch or pacing the waiting room...or just going outside in the cold to smoke a cigarette since there was a sign that said smoking inside the hospital was prohibited.

Megan, who was utterly bored out of her mind, had already flipped through and finished a stack of tabloids, news, literary, beauty, and parenting magazines. Now, all she could do was just glance at the small TV installed in the corner of the room that connected the ceiling and two walls, which was currently playing an episode of *The Price is Right*.

As Alice dilated and enjoyed the effects of the epidural - aside from being unable to get out of bed and the feeling of heavy legs - Kevin supported her in various ways. He discussed and finalized baby names with her, held her hand, rubbed her back, fed her ice chips, and even sang some of his original songs to her like he briefly did for his mother 18 years ago...even the god awful "I Piss On Your Grave" song, which he wrote for his band when he was 17 and mad at Frank.

Still, even with the epidural, Alice could still feel some pain and pressure in her lower regions as she pushed - making all the usual noises of grunting, huffing, groaning, moaning, and for one brief moment, screaming.

Despite Alice's tight grip and the intensity of the situation, Kevin never let go of her hand as she continued to deliver their child, his knuckles turning white as her nails dug into him. With her other hand, she was gripping the bed rail.

"You're doing great, Alice," the doctor encouraged from the foot of the bed, positioned between Alice's widespread legs; her entire lower half exposed and her feet resting on the stirrups. "The head is out."

"I love you, babe. I'm proud of you," Kevin praised, running his free hand through Alice's sweaty hair before resting it atop her propped-up knee and grabbed ahold of it; a nurse supporting Alice's other leg. He shifted his gaze from Alice's face to the foot of the bed, where he could see a wet mass of dark hair emerging from the intersection of Alice's thighs - that was their baby's head. "I can see it," he whispered breathlessly into his wife's ear, and Alice smiled back at him.

"Alright, one more push," Dr. Abrams urged, smiling under his surgical mask.

Alice tucked her chin to her chest and focused all her remaining energy on delivering her baby, gritting her teeth and grunting guttural noises of pain and her face flushing as she did so, feeling some intense burning down there and then shivering at the odd sensation of feeling the baby leave her body and the sound of a rush of fluid.

Not long after, the shrill sounds of a newborn crying pierced through the air.

"Congratulations! It's a girl!" Dr. Abrams lifted the squirming baby up so Kevin and Alice could see their daughter - covered in blood and other fluids yet still beautiful - before placing her on the white blanket with pink and blue stripes that was waiting on Alice's chest.

With tears of joy shimmering in his eyes, Kevin leaned closer and gently pressed a tender kiss on Alice's forehead, unable to take his eyes off the wailing infant cradled in her arms.

Alice was also crying as she cradled her daughter. "I can't believe you're finally here," she breathed. "I'm your mommy."

"Dad, do you want to cut the cord?" A nurse offered, handing Kevin a pair of scissors as she walked over to the baby on Alice's chest and clamped the umbilical cord.

Floored and honored by the offer, Kevin seized the moment and grabbed the scissors, but he then froze in fear, afraid that he might do it wrong and hurt her. He read every book on pregnancy, childbirth, and baby care and paid close attention in the birthing classes, yet they didn't teach him how to do this. They didn't even mention he would get that opportunity. "Um, where do I cut it?"

"It's pretty easy. Just cut right here," the nurse guided, smiling at Kevin as she walked him through the simple procedure. "Good job."

As the nurse took the baby from Alice's arms to the bassinet warmer to clean, weigh, and assess her, Kevin followed the nurse and kept his eyes on his daughter as everything happened, captivated by the sight of his child.

Meanwhile, Dr. Abrams attended to Alice, who was still a little loopy from the drugs, to manage the afterbirth and the mess.

"Kevin, what did I do with the baby?" Alice asked, uneasily moving her head toward different directions as if she was looking for the baby. "Oh, god! I think I dropped her!"

"Alice, she's fine. She's right here," reassured Kevin from a few feet away, remembering that the anesthesiologist warned him and Alice that this would be a side effect of the epidural.

Eventually, after everything was taken care of, Kevin and Alice were left alone to bond with their daughter. She had a small mop of Kevin's dark brown hair and Alice's brown eyes.

"She's so beautiful," said Alice as tears of happiness streamed down her face, staring down at the tiny miracle bundle in her arms.

"Just like her mother," Kevin nodded in agreement, holding back tears.

"And her father, too," added Alice, turning her gaze away from Kevin and back down at the newborn. "And speaking of Daddy, it's his turn to hold you," she cooed, allowing Kevin to gently take their daughter from her arms so he could hold her for the first time.

Kevin cradled his daughter gently in his arms, feeling a rush of joy, love, and gratitude wash over him. He gazed down at her, marveling at her tiny delicate features. She was truly their miracle child, a precious gift and happy surprise they had longed for during the seven lengthy years of struggle and heartbreak with infertility. The warmth of her small body against his chest was comforting, yet the reality that this little girl was actually his child felt incredibly surreal. He also felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility. It was hard to believe that this fragile life, so completely dependent on him, was now part of his world.

He was finally a father.

"Hi, sweetie," he whispered softly, placing his hand on hers and letting her grasp his finger with her tiny fist as he surrendered to tears. "I'm your dad."

Eventually, the rest of the family were permitted to enter the room to meet the baby.

"Grandpa's here! Where is my grand-princess?" Frank announced happily as he walked in with the rest of the grandparents and the aunt.

"Here she is," Kevin proudly presented the little girl to her grandparents and her aunt - all of them enchanted by the first glimpse of their first grandchild and niece.

Erwin and Rebekah walked over to Alice's bed and leaned in to hug her, whispering praises about how beautiful their granddaughter was and how proud they were of her. Meanwhile, Frank, Sue, and Megan huddled around Kevin, admiring the bundle of joy he cradled in his arms; Frank and Sue also telling Kevin he did good.

"Oh, Kevin, she's beautiful," Sue was in tears as she observed her granddaughter's features, reminding her so much of her own firstborn child. "She looks just like you."

Frank clapped Kevin on the back and then gently placed a hand on his shoulder. "Congratulations, son," he praised. "You did something right for once."

"Thanks, Dad," Kevin accepted the compliment.

The baby was passed around to her grandparents, each of them taking turns to bond with their granddaughter, cooing at her and whispering sweet words.

"Hey there, bubbeleh," Rebekah crooned as she held the baby, her voice filled with warmth. Erwin leaned in closer, a gentle smile lighting up his face when he reached out to stroke the baby's cheek. "I'm Bubbe," Rebekah continued, her eyes sparkling with joy before referring to her husband. "And this is Zayde."

As she handed the baby to Erwin, the old man wasn't afraid to hold back the happy tears that began to well in his eyes as he whispered something in Hebrew to the little girl. "I'm Zayde, in case you were wondering," he chuckled.

When it was Sue's turn to hold the newborn, she couldn't contain her emotions. With tears glistening in her eyes, she greeted, "Hey there, little one, it's Grandma. Now, go say 'hi' to Grandpa." With loving care, she passed the baby over to Frank.

"Hey, princess," Frank said, his heart bursting with joy as he looked down at his first grandchild. "This is your grandpa talking to you. You might have crashed Thanksgiving, but trust me, you're the best kind of party crasher...just like your dad was the best kind of accident. I also guarantee you'll be smarter than your daddy ever was."

From the corner, Kevin rolled his eyes and couldn't help but mutter quietly under his breath. "Except I'm not letting her think 'the party crasher' is her name."

Although, when it was Megan's turn to hold the baby, she was a bit hesitant to do so.

"I don't know," she shuddered, intimidated by her niece's fragility. "What if I drop her and I fuck her up for life?"

"Look, I know this kind of thing is new for you, but I promise you won't," Sue reassured her. She guided Megan to sit down on the small sofa in the room and demonstrated the proper way to hold a newborn as Kevin gently placed the baby into Megan's arms.

"This is your Aunt Megan," Kevin introduced his daughter to his teenage sister.

"Hi," Megan said nervously, not quite sure how to talk to a baby and could only spill out familial facts to her niece. "Yeah, that's me. I'm your aunt. Well, actually, I'm only one of your aunts. You have like three. You also have three uncles. Um, I'm going to hand you back to your dad now." With that, Megan impatiently gestured for Kevin to take the baby out of her arms.

Once Megan was relieved from the weight of the fragile newborn in her arms, she asked the question that everyone else had been wondering. "So, does she have a name yet?"

"Yes," replied Alice, who was still a bit loopy from the drugs that haven't completely worn off yet and also exhausted and a bit out of it. "I think I would like to name her Apple, because I love apple pie."

All of the grandparents in the room, wide-eyed and gasping in disbelief, were shocked and horrified by the name choice.

"Oh, Christ," Frank grumbled, pinching his nose and hoping Kevin and Alice didn't fill out the birth certificate yet. "Kevin, please don't tell me that is going to be her name."

"I don't know," Megan shrugged, smirking. "I think that name sounds kind of cool."

"That is not her name. We didn't even agree on that," reassured Kevin, remembering the final choice they settled on when she was in labor. "We already settled on a name ten hours ago. The nurse said she might say things like that because of the drugs."

"Oh, good," Frank sighed with relief. "So, what is her name?"

"Her name is Natalie," answered Kevin proudly as he looked down at the little girl in his arms. "Natalie Hannah Goldman-Murphy."

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed. Please review :)

L is For Lullaby

Chapter Summary

Kevin sings an original lullaby he wrote for Natalie.

Chapter Notes

Yes guys, I actually have a headcanon that Throbinson Crusoe actually wrote a song about peeing on someone's grave. Kevin wrote "I Piss On Your Grave" after he had a fight with Frank about deciding to major in music, which is a "useless degree" in Frank's mind. Basically, "I Piss On Your Grave" is about a guy peeing on his father's final resting spot as a way of telling him he was wrong about him not finding success in pursuing a music career.

Even though Kevin didn't become a famous rockstar and became a music teacher instead, he still writes and records original songs as a hobby, but most of the songs were either made privately for his family and some were just part of his lesson plans.

In a similar way, Bill eventually does stand-up as a hobby and also joins a hockey team again by becoming assistant coach for his daughter's team.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

December 20, 1992
Staten Island, NY
Kevin and Alice's House

For what was maybe the third or fourth time that night, a sleep-deprived and half-asleep Kevin and Alice were jolted awake by baby Natalie's piercing cries through the static of the baby monitor, signaling that one of them needed to get up and tend to her.

For the past three weeks since their daughter was born, neither of them were able to enjoy a solid night's sleep.

Kevin sat up and groaned exasperatingly when he noticed it was 3:11 am on his bedside alarm clock. Alice, who already tended to Natalie an hour earlier to feed her, murmured to Kevin to remind him it was his turn to deal with the baby.

"I know," sighed Kevin, rubbing his tired eyes as he was perched on the edge of the bed. He was not looking forward to having to deal with a crying baby in the middle of the night on

work nights, and neither was Alice.

Hopefully, Clinton would sign the proposed Family and Medical Leave Act into law after he takes office in January. Kevin and Alice were pissed and disappointed when Bush vetoed it in September because they wanted to be able to stay home with their baby for a lengthy amount of time without jeopardizing their jobs.

Luckily, one of the rare advantages of being teachers and having a baby born during Thanksgiving break was that they were able to enjoy the guaranteed full two weeks off with their newborn during the winter break. However, they had used all their paid time off for the school year during the three weeks between Thanksgiving break and the start of winter break. Therefore, they would still have to return to work in January when the new semester starts. But at least they would still have the weekends, Spring Break, and summer break to stay home with Natalie.

Kevin rubbed his eyes as he dragged himself to the nursery, Natalie's cries getting louder and louder as he got closer before eventually walking in.

"Hey, sweetie," he said quietly as he reached into the crib and picked her up. "Daddy's right here," he soothed, cradling her against his chest and whispering soft hushes. Her cries softened as he lightly swayed her, cradling her head with one hand and supporting her bottom with another.

As he did that, he noticed her diaper felt full and kind of heavy, and she smelled kind of funky. "Looks like you need a change."

According to his mother, his father hasn't changed any of his, Bill's, or Maureen's diapers when they were little. He did change Megan's a few times, but he was always reluctant to do that. Ironically, Kevin had more balls than Frank when it came to changing Megan's diaper and always handled the task a lot better.

Once Natalie had a fresh diaper, Kevin sat down with her in the rocking chair that Alice's grandmother gifted her at the baby shower. He gently glided back and forth while cradling her against his chest and running his fingers over her soft head and whispering hushed, sweet words to her before singing the lullaby he had written when Alice was pregnant.

"Little one, still tucked away inside,
Safe within your mommy's gentle tide.
We can't wait to kiss your precious face,
As our hearts hold you in this place.
Sleep now, little one, growing strong,
As we wait for you to come along.
Close your eyes, and drift away,
Dream of sunshine, come what may.
We're ready for you, with open arms,
To protect you from every future harm.
A home of warmth, a safe embrace,
My precious child, you'll find your space.

Sleep now, little one, growing strong,
As we wait for you to come along.
Close your eyes, and drift away,
Dream of sunshine, come what may."

The lullaby soothed Natalie to sleep, as her father's singing voice and original songs - songs that were far better than ones about cradles falling out of trees or trying to bribe a baby with increasingly extravagant gifts to stop crying - always seemed to do. After all, Kevin did often play his guitar and sing to her many of his original songs he had written for babies while she was still in her mother's belly.

"Even if we don't get along in the future, I'll always love you, even if you hate me," he whispered, suddenly realizing that his own father told him the same thing when he was little as well as the fear of being just like his father coming back.

Sure, there were a few differences between him and Frank when it came to the circumstances under which they had their first child, which was probably one factor that fostered their relationship. For instance, unlike Frank and Sue, Kevin and Alice were older and already married and established in their careers. Additionally, Natalie was a happy surprise after he and Alice had been trying to conceive for a long time, whereas Kevin was a sudden, unplanned pregnancy that occurred at a particularly inconvenient moment.

Kevin didn't hate his dad or resent him overly, but he was still determined to break the harmful cycle of abuse and be a better parent. He promised himself that he wouldn't yell at his kids, insult or belittle them, discourage their passions, threaten to put them through a wall, or lay a hand or a wooden spoon on them.

Thankfully, his wife and father-in-law helped Kevin figure out and develop better ways to manage his anger, handle negative feelings, and control his temper.

Still, despite all that, he couldn't help but wonder what the teen years would be like and what his relationship with Natalie would look like at that point. Would they constantly be fighting like he and Frank did? Would their relationship be strained? Would she resent him? And given Kevin's own poor choices as a teenager, would he and Alice end up having to bail her out of jail one day?

Still, Kevin tried not to worry too much about that right now. He kissed the top of Natalie's head and just tried to savor this moment with his little girl.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter. Please review :)

M is For Matrimony

Chapter Summary

Bill and Nia get married.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

March 20, 1993
Chicago, IL
Chicago City Hall

Bill fiddled with the bow tie of his suit as he stood with the officiant at the altar, which was just a bifurcated grand staircase in the ceremony room of City Hall, as he panned his vision around the room. On the other side of the closed doors that were 40 feet across from him, Nia and Rosie were getting themselves ready to walk down the aisle for the wedding ceremony.

Bill and Nia opted for a simple courthouse ceremony by signing up for an early afternoon time slot. Following the ceremony, they would have the "reception" at an Italian restaurant and in their apartment. There were no bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girls, ring bearers, maid of honor, or best man. They also chose to forgo a bridal shower, bachelor party, and any other expensive traditions.

The couple also decided to invite only their immediate relatives to their wedding, which helped reduce the stress of choosing guests. As a result, there weren't many people on either side of the aisle, and most of the chairs remained empty, particularly on the bride's side since she had fewer siblings than the groom.

They only had a total of fourteen wedding guests - Rosie, Georgia, Darryl, Tina, Tyler, Amber, Frank, Sue, Megan, Kevin, Alice, Natalie, Maureen, and Scott.

On the left side of the aisle, Darryl was gently bouncing a 10-month-old Amber in his lap, letting her stand on his thighs. Right next to him, Tina struggled to get four-year-old Tyler (who was saying whatever was on his mind) to settle down and sit still, managing to hold the bored and impatient child in her lap. Georgia eventually stepped in to assist and handed Tyler one of his toy action figures, yet still telling him he needed to sit down and behave.

On the right side of the aisle, Frank and Sue, Maureen and Scott, and Kevin and Alice were all sitting together in pairs, smiling at Bill from their seats. Megan had Natalie comfortably seated in her lap, talking sweetly to her niece and allowing her to grab her fingers and the fabric of her formal dress.

In hindsight, Bill and Nia realized it was a good idea to not have a big, fancy wedding that involved all that night-before stuff...especially now that some of their siblings had small children. Since Kevin and Alice didn't arrive in Chicago until 9:00 pm the previous night, they were unable to attend dinner with the family due to being too exhausted and Natalie being fussy. Darryl and Tina decided they needed to leave the family rehearsal dinner early because Amber was getting cranky and they needed to get her and Tyler ready for bed on time.

As Bill waited for the ceremony begin, he could already predict that Frank's toast would involve him jokingly threatening to put him through a wall if he was ever a shitty husband and father or fucked it up. That was part of his speech at Kevin's wedding. At Maureen's wedding, during his father-of-the-bride toast, he told Scott he would put him through a fucking wall if he ever made his little girl cry...and was likely going to tell Megan's future husband the same thing.

Bill was excited, yet also nervous.

Everyone stood up once the doors across the altar swung open, revealing Nia, holding an eloquent bouquet of bright green carnations in one arm and intertwining her other around Rosie's arm as he escorted her down the aisle. "Sheep May Safely Graze" played gracefully in the background.

Bill could not take his eyes off his bride the closer she and her father got to the altar. Her hair was styled in a neat, curly bun adorned with a faux ribbon headpiece and a veil that cascaded down to her waist. In his eyes, she was glowing in her wedding dress - a long-sleeved gown with an empire waist and line scoop neckline, which highlighted her gold necklace.

When Rosie and Nia approached the altar, Rosie leaned in and kissed Nia on the cheek. Then, she walked up the steps of the staircase and stood next to Bill, who took her hand as they smiled at each other. Before taking his seat, Rosie reached out to shake Bill's hand.

"Please be seated," the officiant began to speak, and all of the guests complied. "Welcome, family and friends, or just family," he joked, prompting laughter from everyone in the room before he continued. "We gather here today to celebrate the marriage between William Xavier Murphy and Nia Renee Roosevelt. You have all come here to share in this commitment they make to one another, to offer your love and support to this union, and to allow William and Nia to start their married life together," he continued.

"Just call me 'Bill', please," Bill whispered to the officiant, who nodded before continuing.

Their entire family was smiling up at them. All of their parents were crying tears of joy, except for Frank who seemed to lack tear ducts but still wore a happy expression. Their siblings and their significant others were either just happily watching everything unfold at the altar or doing that along with trying to their best to keep their offspring calm.

What was surprising was that they had so far gotten through the ceremony without Tyler loudly saying what was on his mind or Amber or Natalie fussing. However, the children still weren't completely quiet as the babies still babbled and cooed.

"Bill, do you take Nia to be your lawfully wedded wife? Do you promise to love, honor, cherish, and respect her for as long as you both shall live, until death do you part?"

"I do," said Bill confidently, a big smile lighting up on his face as he slid the wedding band onto Nia's finger.

Turning to Nia, the officiant continued. "And Nia, do you take Bill to be your lawfully wedded husband? Do you promise to love, honor, cherish, and respect him for as long as you both shall live, until death do you part?"

"I do," Nia replied softly, her eyes shimmering with happiness as Bill allowed her to slip the wedding band onto his finger; both of them exchanging smiles.

"By the power vested in me by the state of Illinois, I now pronounce you husband and wife," the officiant declared, his voice resonant with warmth and authority. "You may now kiss the bride."

Bill and Nia then exchanged their first kiss as husband and wife, continuing to do so as their family stood up from their seats and applauded them.

However, amidst the celebration, Tyler did the typical thing a four-year-old would do. "Ew! Gross!" He exclaimed loudly at the sight of an affectionate display between the bride and groom, scrunching up his face in disgust. Darryl quickly turned to his son with a bemused yet firm expression, reprimanding him softly. But the seriousness of the moment was quickly overshadowed by laughter erupting from everyone around.

"I love you," Nia whispered softly to Bill, looking up at him with arms draped over his neck.

"I love you, too," Bill whispered back.

Within minutes, everyone approached the newlywed couple to exchange handshakes and words of congratulations.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. Please review :)

G is For Graduation

Chapter Summary

Megan graduates high school.

Chapter Notes

So, from now on, Vic Jr. will be referred to as "Junior" in future chapters.

Anyway, enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

May 22, 1993
Rustvale, PA
Huey Long High School

The elderly Principal Morgan was halfway through the alphabet, rapidly and apathetically calling out the first and last names of every graduate from the Huey Long High School Class of 1993. Each time a name was called out - at a pace of three students per second - the audience of friends and family erupted in applause.

The Murphys, including those living in Rustvale and those who traveled from different states to attend this ceremony, eagerly waited for Megan's turn.

"Derek Mulligan. Kristen Muntz. Megan Murphy," Principal Morgan called out monotonously as those three students entered the stage one by one.

Megan beamed with pride as she made her way across the auditorium stage in her cobalt blue graduation cap and gown, a yellow stole draped over her shoulders, and her tassel swaying gently with each step.

After receiving her diploma from Mr. Morgan, she hesitantly yet politely shook his hand. After he told her "congratulations", Megan could have sworn she heard him mutter "finally" under his breath, as he seemed relieved that the last Murphy had graduated, having already had enough of Frank and Sue Murphy's usually annoying, disrespectful, foul-mouthed, defiant, and short-tempered offspring.

As she walked off the stage with a broad smile on her face, she waved at her parents, siblings, siblings-in-law, niece, aunt, uncle, and paternal grandmother, all of whom were standing as

they applauded. Next to the Murphys were Vic, Beverly, Chad, and Tiffany, all waiting for Vic Jr.'s name to be called.

Eventually, after the last student received their diploma and Mr. Morgan delivered the closing remarks, the Class of 1993 enthusiastically tossed their caps into the air.

Frank and Sue sat in the audience, feeling a bittersweet mix of emotions and accomplishment as their youngest child reached this crucial milestone. Sure, they experienced similar feelings when Kevin, Bill, and Maureen walked across the stage and threw up their caps in 1977, 1980, and 1982. However, this moment felt particularly poignant and surreal as Megan was doing this a decade later when the aforementioned older three had moved on to their own adult lives; all of them now married, and one even had a kid of their own.

It was official; their last child was grown up and would soon be moving out to start her own life.

For the first time in 34 fucking years, and now because of Scout's recent passing earlier this year, it was going to be just the two of them.

After enduring the inconvenience of taking six different photos of her in her graduation gown - one with just her, one with her parents, one with her siblings, one with her parents and siblings together, another with her siblings-in-law and niece added in the photo, and one with her entire extended family who attended her graduation - Megan enjoyed a joyful celebratory early evening dinner with her family. After that, she eagerly headed next door to the Reynolds' house for the Class of '93 graduation party.

The atmosphere of the large house buzzed with excitement as nearly the entire student body - almost half a quarter of them were results of Smokey Greenwood's sabotaged condoms - gathered in the living room, up the stairs, and in the backyard. The air was filled with the aroma of snacks and beverages, accompanied by the sounds of Nirvana, Salt-N-Pepa, and Green Day blasting from the speakers.

Amidst the lively crowd, Vic and Beverly took on their roles as supervisors, allowing the teenagers some freedom while ensuring the celebration remained enjoyable and safe.

However, that didn't stop the teenagers from sneaking around to turn things up a little.

Thankfully, there was no cocaine or any other illegal, reckless things occurring - except for the fact that someone had spiked the punch and there was some marijuana and cigarettes involved. Additionally, a few teens hid away somewhere in the house to have sex.

While most of the students were either inside discreetly banging each other, getting hammered, or getting stoned on the water couch and in the backyard pool, Megan hanged around outside on the front porch with Junior and Heather as they smoked their cigarettes and consumed their cups of vodka punch.

"So, what are you guys going to do?" Megan, who was a little buzzed from the punch, asked her friends with curiosity. She already had her plans mapped out: she would continue

working her part-time job before heading to the University of Pittsburgh in the fall to study psychology. Heather and Junior, on the other hand, were a bit more spontaneous and less linear with their plans.

"My dad wants me to work with him at the KWEEZE over the summer so I can get some work experience, and then for the next four years, I'll be boning hot chicks at frat parties at Rustvale University," Junior said, torn between excitement and frustration since Rustvale was the only college he applied to that accepted him. "But Mom and Dad said I need to focus more on my education and not be so careless and reckless. Dad doesn't want me to be like my mother."

"What do you mean your Dad don't want you to be like your mother?" Heather, whose logic and cognitive thinking was currently low from her drunk stupor, chuckled as she gazed at the night sky full of stars.

Junior huffed, his frustration evident beneath the layers of intoxication. "What I meant is my parents don't want me to turn out like Karen," he shot back bitterly, reminding his friends about his absentee biological mother.

"Oh, right," nodded Heather, a regretful look creeping onto her face. "The receptionist at Reindeer Rentals that fucks everyone. Megan, didn't she and your brother fuck on the couch when he was 14?"

"Yeah, and it was statutory rape," scoffed Megan softly yet angrily. Despite being way too young to remember the details, she was aware of the psychological impact it had on Kevin, especially now that he had a daughter. Frank and Sue were very upset when he tearfully admitted it during a family therapy session with Dr. Goldman. There was even a brief period when Kevin was afraid that Junior might be his baby...but that was thankfully not true and the paternity test did confirm that the child was Vic's.

"Anyway, I'm hoping to land a job at a radio station somewhere else after college," Junior quickly pivoted the conversation in a new direction. He always tried to separate himself from his biological mother, whose negative reputation among the town hung over him like a dark cloud. To Junior, Beverly will always be his real mom.

Heather let out a long frustrated sigh, a plume of smoke swirling around her as she spoke. "My mom is mad that I'll be going to community college in Boston to be closer to my dad instead of close to her at Rustvale University. But I don't want to stay in this shitty town, and I want to spend more time with my dad. Plus, I still have no idea what to major in."

Megan took a slow drag from her cigarette. "But what do you really want to do in the long run?" She asked, genuinely interested.

"I don't fucking know," grumbled Heather, frustration bumbling beneath the surface. "What I do know is that I don't want to be a bitter divorcee stuck in a dead-end job in Rustvale for the rest of their life like my mom...or stuck teaching in my 70s like Mr. Durkin."

That was true.

Not many people stuck around Rustvale or its neighboring towns after high school since there just wasn't much to hold their interest. Those who did stay, like Father Fitzsimmons and Lunchlady Fitzy, seemed to be miserable.

"I guess you're still thinking of being a shrink?" Heather continued the conversation with pique curiosity.

"Yes," confirmed Megan, remembering the reason why she was choosing this career path.

She recalled the dysfunctional chaos of her own messed-up family, always shoving their feelings, trauma, and unresolved issues down. It was clear things had been far worse during and around the time she was born. If Kevin never dated the town therapist's daughter, the Murphys would never have gotten those much-needed marriage and family therapy sessions, which they definitely should have sought help much earlier.

But now, as the prospect of leaving Rustvale loomed ahead, Megan couldn't help but feel nervous yet excited to be leaving her hometown and starting her life.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. Please review :)

S is For Safety

Chapter Summary

Frank spends time with his granddaughter.

Chapter Notes

DISCLAIMER: Yes, I'm aware that a couple of the sleep practices Kevin and Alice did mentioned in this chapter are not safe by today's guidelines, but these were recommendations at the time. I tried my best to research what the child safety guidelines were like in 1992 and 1993. Although the "Back to Sleep" campaign to promote a supine sleeping position was launched in 1994 and the position wasn't further refined by the AAP until 1996, the recommendation sort of came in 1992...and it is still possible that some parents had that recommended by their pediatrician (and because Nia is a pediatrician and was probably aware of the research going on at the time, I headcanon that she at least told Kevin and Alice about those studies and guidelines and they trusted her)...but the AAP recommendation in 1992 also recommended that infants sleeping on their sides was fine. Also, while we are aware today that crib bumpers are a suffocation hazard, parents were not aware of that in the 90s, so it is likely that Kevin, Bill, and Maureen would have used crib bumpers and also put blankets and pillows in the crib if they had babies in the 90s and early 00s.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

August 6, 1993
Staten Island, NY
Kevin and Alice's House

As Frank and Sue washed and put away the dishes after dinner, Megan played with Natalie on a blanket sprawled out on the floor in the middle of Kevin and Alice's living room. The baby crawled around and babbled as her aunt watched her and even tried to get her to stand up using her for support.

Frank and Sue, who were visiting Kevin and Alice and Natalie, had been tasked with looking after the baby while the couple was in Brooklyn celebrating their tenth wedding anniversary, jovially observed their youngest child interacting and playing with their oldest child's firstborn.

Natalie, who was now eight months old, had achieved several milestones. Not only was she crawling, but she was also self-feeding, babbling, giggling, and squealing. However, she had

also developed stranger anxiety, even towards "strangers" like her grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Even a slight change in her parents' appearance, like them removing their glasses, would make her think they were different people.

Thankfully, neither set of grandparents took offense to Natalie being uneasy around them at all. Her maternal grandparents already expected it given Erwin's background in psychology, and told Kevin and Alice that more time with them would help. As for her paternal grandparents, they understood because they had four kids and each of them were the same way at that age.

Once Frank and Sue finished the last of the dishes, Sue went over to join Megan and Natalie on the floor. Looking at his granddaughter from afar, Frank observed that she looked so much like Kevin.

Also, speaking of babies, there was even more fantastic news for the Murphys - Bill and Nia were expecting a baby. According to Bill, they decided to start trying a month after the wedding and surprisingly conceived on their first attempt. This meant that Frank and Sue would be gaining another grandchild in six months.

Yet, despite having a grandkid to dote on and another to look forward to, as Frank watched Sue and Megan interact with Natalie (the family cat, Frodo, eventually joining them), he thought about how odd it was going to be to not have any kids living in his house. As much as he looked forward to the prospect of more peace and quiet and no parental or work responsibilities, he couldn't shake off the melancholy that accompanied this transition - and neither could Sue.

Frank couldn't believe he was admitting this, but despite anticipating for all the kids to grow up and move out, he was going to miss all the chaos that came with raising children once Megan leaves for college in a week.

By 9:00 pm, Sue had gone to bed early and Megan had fallen asleep on the couch, where Frank was also sitting with Natalie in his arms. Even though it was past her bedtime and she was still awake (and Kevin would probably not like that), Frank was going to take any quality time with his grandchild that he could get.

Frank used one hand to bounce Natalie on his knee while holding a can of White House beer in the other as he watched a marathon of *Colt Luger* reruns, which were probably playing because of Reid Harrison's recent death. Natalie, whose gaze seemed to be focused on her grandfather's drink, reached her tiny arm out to grab the beer in Frank's hand.

"Oh, no, princess," Frank playfully chastised once he noticed Natalie try to grab it, immediately pulling it away and setting it down on the coffee table before she could take it out of his hand or stick a finger in it. "That's Grandpa's, not for babies. No sips from Grandpa's beer until you're at least thirteen."

Kevin also mentioned to him that Natalie has reached an inconvenient milestone: she's getting into everything, like her dad's perfectly alphabetized albums organized into either vinyl records, cassette tapes, or CDs. Speaking of getting into things, Frank was surprised by

all the precautions Kevin and Alice have taken to prevent Natalie from getting into the lethal things in their home - measures he and Sue had never even considered when raising their four children.

Seriously, Kevin and Alice babyproofed the shit out of their house, and Bill and Nia were planning to do that as well once their baby starts crawling. All the cabinets and drawers within Natalie's reach were locked and impregnable to her. Every accessible, unoccupied electrical outlet was secured with covers. A few baby gates were installed to keep Natalie from entering the kitchen or getting up and down the stairs. Her crib's interior even had a bumper encased around it so her limbs wouldn't get tangled up. They were also adamant that Natalie only sleeps on her back or side since that is what the pediatrician (and Nia) recommended to them. Kevin even said that Natalie wouldn't go near bodies of water without a life jacket.

Heck, Frank even recently noticed a few kids riding their bikes wearing helmets, looking pretty ridiculous in his honest opinion. With all this new safety stuff happening, he thought Kevin and Alice were overdoing it a little bit since he and Sue didn't do any of this safety stuff for him, Bill, Maureen, or Megan...and they survived.

However, he had to admit that looking back, he did realize how extremely lucky his kids were to have survived all those events...and how some of those safety measures could have prevented an expensive hospital bill.

Bill needed stitches in the side of his head when he cut it from hitting the corner of a glass coffee table when he took his first steps. Maureen broke her arm when she tumbled down the stairs after she recently learned to walk. Megan had a very serious head injury when she was seven after she fell off her bike and busted her head open. Even after Kevin was resuscitated from the pool incident, he immediately needed to be under 24-hour observation in the hospital...where he eventually did have a secondary reaction of fluid build-up in his lungs. The four of them kids were lucky to have never gotten punctured with the lawn darts they played with and threw at each other or gotten lead poisoning from some of the toys they put their mouths on when they were little.

Despite the kids' survival, Frank was still haunted by the memory having to perform CPR on a two-year-old Kevin and the memory of him crying for his parents once he regained consciousness, so it kind of made sense why Kevin would take extra measures to make sure what happened to him wouldn't happen to his child.

Frank's thoughts were interrupted when Natalie started to fuss in his arms, signaling that she was tired and it was time to put her in her crib. After all, he knew Kevin and Alice (who said they'd be home around 11:00 pm) would not be happy at the sight of Natalie being up past her bedtime and watching *Colt Luger*.

Even though Natalie couldn't talk yet and was obviously too young to remember this, Frank went ahead and told her anyway.

"Don't tell your dad."

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. Please review :)

P is For Puppy

Chapter Summary

Frank and Sue get a puppy to help fill their empty nest.

Chapter Notes

Although I think Frank would definitely be glad to not have to deal with the stress of work and parenthood anymore once Megan moves out and he retires, I still think he would get the common feelings of empty nest syndrome and loss of purpose.

And while he and Sue are glad to have more time together, keep in mind that during their time as a couple, they only had less than three years where it was just the two of them. Since the year span in which Kevin is born and Megan graduates high school is 34 years, which meant that he and Sue spent 34 years raising children, so now that they're all gone, Frank and Sue are thinking "now what?".

See the end of the chapter for more notes

September 25, 1993
Rustvale, PA
The Murphy House

With Frank and Sue now retired (well, Sue was still teaching her parenting classes) and entering their golden years, and all of their kids officially moved out of the house as of last month, the couple had so much time on their hands nowadays now that it was just the two of them.

However, despite all of this newfound freedom and no kids to deal with, they still felt that something was missing from their lives since Megan went off to college. That, and also since Scout was put to sleep earlier this year, things have been so lonely.

Although they had a granddaughter and a grandson on the way - Bill and Nia told them they were having a boy - their children were scattered far all over the country, taking care of themselves and their own problems. Kevin was in New York City with a family of his own, Bill was in Chicago starting a family with his newly wed wife, Maureen was in Los Angeles with her husband, and Megan was in Pittsburgh for college.

They did often call their three older kids, that wasn't always guaranteed since they were getting shorter over time, often ending with "not now", "I have to leave for work", "I'm tired",

"I need to go to bed", or "I'm eating dinner right now". Recently, Megan was the one who called them the most, and most of those ended with her crying...and that didn't help either Sue or Frank.

With the kids gone, they felt a strange sense of grief and bewildering emptiness, as if they have lost their sense of purpose now that there was no bustling family chaos to deal with anymore.

And it was ironically Frank who felt it more.

As they pulled their 1987 Ford into their driveway, they were carrying a puppy carrier with an actual puppy in the backseat. Their neighbors - looking out their windows or staring on as they sat outside - looked on with curiosity as they brought the puppy carrier into the house. Erwin mentioned that another pet could help fill their empty nest, which he reassured was a normal feeling among many parents once all their kids have moved out.

"Other than volunteering at places, adopting our cats helped me and Rebekah when we felt empty after Daniel moved out," he shared with them three weeks ago. *"You could also volunteer somewhere around town or pursue a regular hobby."*

Three Weeks Ago ...

Dinner - which was Frank's favorite of bacon-wrapped pigs in a blanket with peas, mashed potatoes, and mustard - had been particularly quiet during what had now marked three weeks since Megan left for college.

With the kids no longer in the house, the profound silence had officially settled in and enveloped the atmosphere. All the bedrooms sans theirs were depressingly unoccupied in the kids' absence, filling both of them with an overwhelming sense of loss. They felt the weight of a loss of routine and the absence of childish laughter.

Frank and Sue had no children sitting with them at the table to ask about their school day. There was nobody nearby who needed them anymore.

Of course, Sue still had her parenting classes, but it wouldn't be long before she would eventually pass the torch to Vic or Beverly...or maybe someone a decade younger than her. Oftentimes, teaching those classes at 55-years-old as a grandmother felt a bit surreal...and she was ironically learning more information about parenting and child safety than some other new parents nowadays were given how some guidelines have changed about all that since she had children, even since Megan was born. She also no longer had at least one of her own kids to join her in those classes. She wanted to take care of someone or something.

Now that Frank and Sue spent most of their time at home together - with almost nothing to do but read, watch TV, have sex, and visit Otto in the nursing home every Saturday and Sunday - they found they had very little to discuss outside of politics, current events, and the weather during dinner or even on dates at restaurants.

Sitting across from each other across the dining table, the couple absentmindedly picked at their food as they glanced around the sparsely populated home. Instead of peaceful, the silence felt somber.

When they were clearing the table and washing the dishes, the air was thick with unspoken thoughts until Sue finally broke the silence; Erwin Goldman's suggestion popped in her mind.

"What do you think about getting another dog?" She suggested cautiously, given that both of the family dogs they ever had during the kids' childhoods were gone. Also, with Alice being allergic to dogs, odds are genetics could mean Natalie will be as well.

Frank raised an eyebrow as he recalled Erwin's suggestion that a pet could make a difference. "Another dog?"

"Why not?" Sue replied with a bright smile. "We'd have something to take care of and nurture. The Goldmans said their two cats filled the void. Plus, we could use a little more energy in the house. After all, it's been lonely and too quiet with the kids all gone."

After further discussion, Frank felt a renewed sense of excitement. They decided to turn their words into action, spending the whole next day exploring the local animal shelter to pick out a dog.

Eventually, since that night, Frank and Sue discovered routinely fulfilling and productive ways to occupy all of their free time.

Sue continued to teach her parenting classes at the hospital on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, but she also found more purpose in volunteering at the Ryetown Food Bank on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Many women over 50 from the Quint Cities area also volunteered there, including Rebekah Goldman, Georgia Roosevelt, and Margaret Ichikawa. Even when her children were not with her, Sue enjoyed spending time with the mothers of her three older kids' spouses, which was pleasantly surprising since Louis and Ray had moved to Arizona.

Speaking of the three older kids' in-laws, Frank began hosting a weekly Sunday night poker game with Rosie, Erwin, and John Ichikawa. He also started another tradition of going bowling with Sue every Friday night.

Whenever Frank and Sue had down time, they would often spend time tending to their blossoming garden, which had become a shared hobby that they enjoyed together.

After completing the adoption paperwork, Frank and Sue were finally allowed to take the dog of their choice home. The puppy they picked out was a male who was a golden retriever.

"So, what should we name the little guy?" Sue chirped as she and Franksat on the living room floor as they watched the puppy stumble around and show them affection, already making himself at home and enthusiastically wagging his tail.

"General," Frank said with a nod, as he seemed to have a thing for military-sounding names, which was why their first dog was named Major.

"Really?" Sue scoffed and laughed. "That sounds kind of random and doesn't really sound like a name. What about something a bit more...I don't know...real?"

They both pondered in silence for a moment as the only sound that filled the room was the puppy's barks.

"Okay, how about Colonel?" Frank suggested, once again coming up with another military rank name.

Sue thought for a minute as she experimented with the name by saying it, eventually deciding that it was a decent name. "You know what, I think that name would suit him just fine."

"Yeah," agreed Frank, allowing the puppy to jump on him and lick his face before giving the puppy a scratch behind his ears. "Colonel it is then."

"Welcome to the family, Colonel," Sue greeted, giving Colonel a pet.

The golden retriever raised his head, tail wagging furiously, as if he understood every word. In that moment, Frank and Sue felt an overwhelming sense of happiness. They had found not just a name but had also begun the next chapter in their lives, filled with the love and laughter of a puppy that would help fill the empty spaces in their hearts.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed. Please review :)

S is For Stand-Up

Chapter Summary

Bill performs his first full stand-up.

Chapter Notes

Yes, Bill Murphy does technically become a comedian, but it's more of a side hobby he has and not as a career that makes him famous.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

October 16, 1993
Chicago, IL
O'Hara's Pub

With their baby set to arrive in a few months, Bill and Nia have been enjoying many more date nights out together, such as eating at restaurants and going to the movies.

However, this date night at O'Hara's Pub was a bit different from the others. Tonight, Bill (after taking a few stand-up comedy classes on Sundays) was about to perform stand-up for the first time during the pub's Stand-Up Saturdays. It was something he really wanted to try and get done before the baby comes.

Although he was ecstatic about his big break, Bill was also nervous. Of course, he did frequently attend the events at the pub since moving here, but he never actually performed.

While the current guy on stage wrapped up his comedic monologue, Bill then turned to Nia; both of them sitting with their chairs turned outward to face the stage. She tightened her grip on his hand, a warm and reassuring smile spreading across her face. Her eyes sparkled with encouragement as she silently reassured her husband that he would knock it out of the park.

"You'll do great," she whispered, leaning in to give him a kiss.

Bill returned her smile as his heart swelled with his gratefulness for his wife's support. He placed his other hand gently on her belly, feeling a little bit of movement from his unborn son, whose name they were still debating.

Speaking of the baby, although Bill was excited, he was also nervous about being a father for a few reasons outside of the typical fears many first-time fathers had.

Bill and Nia were going to love their child no matter what he looked like, but they were nervous about the unique challenges their mixed-race child might face. Being born into a world of racial segregation, they didn't know any biracial kids growing up, so they didn't really know what to expect. They were only familiar with a few interracial/interfaith couples, mainly Bill's siblings and their spouses. Kevin and Alice were pretty much the only couple they could turn to for advice on raising a child with two different cultures. However, since Natalie was still a baby, they couldn't really provide them with insights from a child's perspective just yet.

Although Bill was aware of it when he married Nia, it was a well-known fact that his son was going to be black. This reality meant that his child (and other subsequent children) would face numerous challenges in life that Bill, as a white man, never experienced - such as the possibility of being racially profiled, or even killed, by the police. The thought of something horrible like that happening to his child was quite terrifying. He was thankful to have Nia and his in-laws there to guide him into being a good advocate and ally for his wife and kids. In fact, Kevin had to learn similar lessons when he married Alice; and the same thing for Maureen when she married Scott.

In addition, although Bill loved his father and appreciated that Frank had improved (albeit slowly) over time with managing his anger as he aged, as well as being a good grandfather to Natalie, that still didn't undo some of the negative effects that Frank's behavior had on Bill and his siblings. Bill did not want to repeat the cycle of being an angry, vindictive father to his little boy, and he didn't want his kids to be afraid of him. However, with him and Nia expecting a son, Bill sometimes worried that this could increase the likelihood of him becoming like his father, especially since Frank was always the hardest on him and Kevin.

"Now, performing for the first time ever, please welcome Bill Murphy!" The manager announced once the last performer returned to the table with his group.

Everyone in the pub applauded as Bill made his way to the stage. He smiled nervously, took a deep breath, and began to speak into the microphone.

"Hi, I'm Bill," he chuckled nervously as he looked around the room, his gaze landing mostly on Nia, who was smiling at him. "I've always been the comedian in my family, but my dad told me I can't make a living by making people laugh. He was kind of right; I don't. I work at an accounting firm, but here I am now, about to make you all laugh without getting paid."

Bill paused to gather his thoughts before continuing his monologue. "Speaking of my dad, I'm about to become one myself. In fact, my wife Nia is over there in the audience," Bill gestured toward Nia, who smiled and waved back at him. "We're due in February, and it's a boy. And babe, I apologize in advance if I make you laugh so hard that you end up peeing your pants tonight."

Everyone in the building laughed along with Nia, who was already aware of what Bill would be joking about as she was there when he drafted his monologue two weeks ago.

"Since I'm having a baby, that means I will actually have to watch him be born...like actually bust out of my wife," Bill said with a playful cringe. "Of all the things I'm nervous about when it comes to being a dad, I'm surprisingly not afraid to see that, thanks to the video they

made us watch in Lamaze class about the miracle of birth. I have to say, it was...beautifully graphic. Also, my wife is a doctor and my mother-in-law used to be a nurse, so I have a couple more reasons to know what birth will actually look like - even a c-section."

A couple people in the audience laughed, while a few stayed silent, which made Bill wonder if he was going to suck at this whole stand-up thing.

"Anyway, watching my child be born will be nothing compared to all the disturbing things I have seen as a kid," Bill said, pursing his lips and nodding. "I've witnessed things that were much more traumatizing than the image of a baby being born. Images that I'm still trying to get out my mind today."

Nia chuckled softly as she noticed Bill's facial expression shift to his familiar "I'm scarred for life" look he often showed whenever he encountered a disturbing image. She also recalled the moment Bill firmly insisted that they stuff some storage bins and their luggage under their bed so nobody would be able to hide underneath it.

"Like when a guy blows up right in front of you, and you see his guts and everything flying everywhere. Or when you walk in on your brother jerking off and using butter as a lubricant. Or, how about when you get stuck hiding under your parents' bed when they have sex, and then coming face-to-face with your dad's hairy nutsack," Bill playfully quivered at the latter memories, in which the disturbingness of those images did eventually recede. On the contrary, the memory of Scoop Dunbarton blowing up - and all of his internal organs, limbs, and appendages splattered on the tarmac - was still haunting and scarring.

Still, everyone in the room laughed their heads off at the mention of his experience under his parents' bed.

"And I know my kid hasn't been born yet, so I might not be the best person to ask for parenting advice just yet. But to all you parents or expecting parents out there, here is my advice," Bill paused for a minute, snickering and clearing his throat. "When you have sex, don't just make sure the door is locked! Please, check under the bed and in the closet to make sure they're not hiding there! Maybe stuff some luggage and boxes under your bed so it will be impossible to hide underneath! No kid wants to see their parents fucking up close! Seriously, that was the parenting advice I gave my brother last year when his wife was pregnant...and yes, this is the same brother I caught fucking his hand!"

Everyone, especially Nia, continued to cackle at Bill's words before he finally got to the main point of his monologue, looking at the cheat sheet in his hands.

"Even though my wife and I conceived on purpose, I'm a little bit...terrified," he said with a chuckle. "It's like I'm about to ride a rollercoaster, but I'm also the one who has to operate it since I'll be responsible for another human being. And once I get on that rollercoaster, I won't be allowed to get off for 18 years."

The audience continued to laugh as Bill took a moment to compose himself. He also made sure that Nia, who often had to use the bathroom more frequently since she got pregnant, didn't accidentally pee her pants like she did last week after sneezing.

"I've read all the books and got a lot of advice from others - family, friends, co-workers, the obstetrician, the nosy cashier at the grocery store, that old lady on the Amtrak. And the amount of information is pretty overwhelming; sleep training, feeding schedules, which sleep position is safest, which carseat won't spontaneously combust," chuckled Bill as he counted off the terms on his fingers. "I feel like I'm preparing for a trip to Mars with an astronaut who speaks only in screams."

The audience continued to laugh.

"My wife told me her dreams have been a bit bizarre since she got pregnant, and I've also been having strange dreams lately," sighed Bill. "The other night, I dreamed that I was trying to change my son's diaper, but I suddenly forgot how to do it. Then, he pees in my face, and I puked on him. Then, he starts talking in a grown man's voice, and he said, 'Dad, what is wrong with you? You can't even change my diaper right! You fucking pussy!' He sounded too much like my dad!"

Nia and everyone else continued to laugh, especially at Bill's imitation of his father. However, during that part of the monologue, Bill thought back to his own father and also his grandfather for a minute.

"Speaking of my old man, who once told me he'd buy me a doll for Christmas if I kept bitching about the guy that blew up in front of me, I've been feeling all this pressure to be a better dad than him and his own father, who was an even bigger asshole," Bill sighed, remembering the moment when Big Bill was about to lay a hand on him when he knocked over a rack of baseball bats...and how that led him to conclude that was how Frank became how he was. "But, I don't know how I'm going to do that if I can't even put a damn crib together without cussing under my breath. Speaking of furniture, fatherhood is going to be like assembling furniture together without an instruction manual."

Everyone in the pub continued to laugh before Bill concluded his monologue with his final words.

"Thank you all. And wish me luck, guys," he chuckled nervously as he gave the microphone back to the manager and then left the stage to sit back down with Nia.

That night back in their apartment, Bill and Nia relaxed on their couch, comfortably settled against each other as Bill operated the remote and surfed through the channels. His free hand slipped towards Nia's belly, gently caressing it.

"I can't wait," he murmured, pressing a kiss to her temple.

"Me, too," Nia sighed, a blissful smile lighting up her face. Just then, a sudden jolt shot through her abdomen, causing her to wince as she instinctively wrapped her arms around her belly.

"You, alright?" It did startle Bill a little before he had to remind himself it was obviously a kick, not a contraction.

"I'm fine, it's just that he's been kickboxing in here all week," she commented absently as Bill turned off the TV and then changed his position on the couch so he would be leaning his head over Nia's protruding belly, kissing it dotingly.

"You'll be a great mom," complimented Bill as Nia absentmindedly played with his hair, his head resting comfortably on her belly.

"You really think so?" Nia replied, her voice barely above a whisper, a flicker of anxiety crossing her face. "I don't really know what to do."

Bill looked up at her, his eyes warm and reassuring. "Well, given your job and the way you are with your patients, I'm sure you will be good with our own child," he said confidently.

However, his smile then faded as he thought back to what he had mentioned in his comedic monologue earlier. He lifted his head off Nia's belly and sat up straight.

"I don't know about me, though," he sighed, staring off into the distance. "My dad had a shitty father, and he was only slightly less shitty than him. What if I'm doomed to be a shitty father, too?"

Nia hummed softly, leaning into Bill's chest. "We'll be good, honey," she whispered soothingly. "I'm scared too, but we're in this together. I believe you have what it takes not to repeat the same mistakes."

Bill looked down at Nia with shining eyes, his smile slowly returning. "I love you," he whispered and smiled before planting a kiss on her forehead. "But we still need to come up with a name for him, though."

"Yeah," Nia frowned in realization, knowing they would have to eventually settle on a boy's name. They did have a back-up plan for the name Jasmine in case their doctor read the ultrasound wrong (Nia did warn Bill that stuff can happen), but they still couldn't agree on what to name their son. She then looked at Bill intently. "And I'm going to say this again, we are not naming him Luke."

Bill groaned with surrender, yet he did mostly suggest that name so he could tell his son he was his father in Darth Vader's voice. "Fine."

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all enjoyed. Please review :)

M is For Miscarriage

Chapter Summary

Maureen has a miscarriage.

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: This chapter contains scenes of a miscarriage.

December 25, 1993
Los Angeles, CA
Maureen and Scott's Apartment

Even though it was a bit earlier than they intended, Maureen and Scott were excited to become parents. Maureen had found out she was pregnant just three weeks ago, and even though she was only nine weeks along, her excitement was growing. She couldn't wait to break the news to her parents and Megan, who were currently in California with them for Christmas, the following morning. Thankfully, she managed to avoid a vomiting episode (though not a nausea spell) in their presence so her family - especially her mother - wouldn't suspect anything.

Unfortunately, all of that joy would be short-lived.

It was 5:00 in the morning when Maureen woke up to back pain and later some pelvic pain, followed by the familiar feeling of some fluids trickling into her underwear. As she climbed out of bed and made her way to the bathroom to investigate, she only continued to feel more of it dripping out. Once she turned on the bathroom lights, she noticed that the inseams of her pants were saturated with blood.

She was by no means an expert, but she knew that this was not a good sign.

Not wanting to wake up her parents or her sister, Maureen, while in excruciating pain, limped back toward her and Scott's bedroom and shook him awake.

"Scott," Maureen, hovering over her husband, whimpered as she roughly shook him. "Scott, wake up."

Scott, who was still half-asleep, stirred as he sat up, fumbling for the switch on the bedside lamp to turn it on. "What?" He asked groggily.

"I'm bleeding," Maureen gasped in pain, digging her nails into the bedsheets as she leaned against the bed.

When Scott turned on the light, he became fully awake as he heard his wife's words and then noticed a crimson blotch in the inseam of her pajama pants.

Without hesitation or even asking any questions, the adrenaline kicked in and he immediately sprang out of bed, slipped on the nearest pair of shoes, and then escorted Maureen out to the kitchen so he could grab the car keys to take her to the hospital.

Once Scott retrieved his keys after a few seconds of frantic searching, Maureen had a sudden urge to push as she felt even more blood drip down her leg as she felt something coming down, but figured she probably shouldn't do that.

Whatever was happening down there, she didn't want to look at it or have any of it drop down her leg and onto the floor...especially if what she felt coming down was her baby.

Scott then remembered that Maureen's folks would be wondering where they were in the next hour or two, so he fumbled around the kitchen for a sticky note and a pen to leave a note for them.

"Hurry up, Scott," Maureen grunted, leaning against the table and then sinking to the floor as her pain intensified. This felt like her period, but much worse. A sudden wave of nausea hit her, and she threw up onto the kitchen floor. "God damn it," she groaned, her mind suddenly worrying about the puddle of sick on the floor for a brief moment.

Scott finished writing the brief note in less than five seconds once he got ahold of a pen and paper. "Alright, let's go," he consoled as he scooped Maureen into his arms and then carried her to their Toyota Camry since she was in so much pain that she couldn't walk. He didn't even care to grab his pager.

Once they reached their car in the parking garage, Scott placed Maureen in the front passenger seat and buckled her in before rushing to the driver's seat on the other side.

"It's going to be okay," he reassured, reaching over to squeeze Maureen's knee. She was whimpering, clutching her lower abdomen and curling her knees into a fetal position.

Immediately, Scott turned the ignition and sped off to the nearest hospital. Thankfully, there was hardly any traffic at this hour.

Throughout the entire ride to the hospital, Maureen felt as if something was about to come out of her, but she tried hard to prevent it from happening.

They didn't fully realize how heavily Maureen was bleeding until they arrived at the bright lights of the ER. Some blood was even flowing down past her knee.

Upon arrival at the hospital, Maureen was quickly taken to an empty bed. A nurse immediately removed everything below her waist and covered her lower half with a sheet to assess what was going on down there. A doctor then performed a Doppler ultrasound,

confirming that there was no fetal heartbeat and that Maureen was experiencing a miscarriage.

To make things worse, the doctor informed them that, upon further examination, Maureen had passed some blood clots and the gestational sac was already protruding through her cervix. He also explained she was at risk for hemorrhage or sepsis and was going to need a D&C to prevent any further complications.

Maureen, still disoriented and groggy from the anesthesia, slowly regained consciousness as she awoke to Scott sitting by her bedside, holding her hand as he tried to stay strong for her. The doctor told them the procedure went smoothly and that it wouldn't affect Maureen's chances of having another baby, but that didn't make this whole experience any better...and trying again was the last thing on either of their minds.

They were already attached to this baby and excited for it. Also, the fact that it was Christmas morning made this whole experience even worse. This morning, they were supposed to tell her parents and Megan, and then make phone calls to Scott's family and Maureen's brothers to tell them that there would be a new addition to the family.

Unbeknownst to Maureen, Frank and Sue were already in the waiting room, waiting for her to come around. Apparently, Megan got up early and noticed the puddle of vomit and Scott's note, then woke up her parents to tell them what was going on. Since Scott and Maureen left their pagers at home and Scott only wrote that they went to the hospital (not telling them which one in this big metropolitan city) because Maureen was bleeding, Frank and Sue were frantically going through the phone book and calling every ER to ask if Maureen was there so they could have a taxi bring them to whatever hospital she was at. Eventually, they figured it out when Scott used a hospital payphone to call them and let them know what had happened.

"Scott, I'm sorry," sniffed Maureen, who was cradling her belly even though there was no longer a life growing inside there anymore. She felt completely numb.

"Honey, it's..." Scott gulped as he tried to hold back his tears while he struggled to pick the right words to say to Maureen, squeezing her hand and kissing it. "It's going to be okay."

A painful silence hung in the air between them, thick with unspoken words and heavy emotions. The quiet stretched on, each passing second amplifying the sadness and grief as the couple exchanged glances, neither of them knowing how to break the silence.

"Your parents are in the waiting room," Scott informed hesitantly, exhaling deeply. "Do you want me to go get them? They're...they're really worried about you."

Albeit hesitantly, Maureen nodded tearfully. "Just my mom, please."

"Of course," Scott sighed. He didn't even kiss Maureen before he left the room to get Sue.

As soon as Sue stepped into the room, her heart sank at the sight of her daughter in such an emotionally fragile state. Maureen, who finally mustered the strength to sit up, finally allowed the dam to break and let the tears fall.

"Mommy," Maureen sobbed, her voice trembling as she finally allowed herself to call her mother that for the first time in seventeen years.

"Oh, sweetheart," Sue sat down next to Maureen on the bed, wrapping an arm around her and letting her cry into her shoulder. "Come here."

"I lost my baby," she muffled.

"I'm here," Sue whispered, running her hand in circles over her daughter's back. "I'm right here."

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